

RICE UNIVERSITY

Temporary Populations: An Architecture of the Interstitial


by

Rachel Dewane

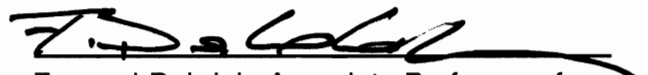
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ABSTRACT

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One unique aspect of the extended stay hotel typology is that as demographics of temporary populations within this dwelling type shift, relationships must constantly be renegotiated. In order to best respond to the demands of this spatial and temporal uncertainty, this project proposes new strategies for how contingent populations and their accompanying programmatic temporalities can cohabitate on the same site. The focus of this research is to leverage the latent potentials of the interstitial space between bodies in an architectural assemblage in order to activate, animate, and register relationships within a collective program.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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To my husband, David, for your patience, critique, strength and support over the last year. To you I am indebted for life. Finally to my yet-to-be born daughter, who although didn't always make the process easy, stayed close.

Rachel

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Part 1

Research Document

"If one were to summarize life in a city and life in a building in one gesture, it would have to be that of passing through borders or walls." - Pier Vittorio Aureli

When passing from the individual to collective, many potential relationships exists in the space between the parts that make up the whole.

How does one define or architecturalize the spatial/temporal interval? Intimate, violent, secret, ordinary and imaginary relationships continuously unfold over time. This is event space; a dynamic and indeterminate zone where relationships have shapes and potentials of their own. It is not that one dictates the other, but that the organization of space, whether centripetal or centrifugal, coexist. (Vidler, 1993, 85) The ambition of this thesis is to leverage the latent potentials of this interstitial space in order to create more dynamic relationships between the individual and the collective it defines.

The collective is not just how a group of individuals is arranged but the 'constructed' space that defines them. In *Atmospheric Politics*, Peter Sloterdijk states, "The public Sphere is not just the effect of people assembling but in fact goes back to the construction of a space to contain them and in which the assembled persons are first able to assemble." (Sloterdijk, 2005, 948) This in-between space is what allows the individual to retain its identity while simultaneously defining it as part of a whole. The organization of the collective is political in that it governs relationships between individuals. This relationship is not preexisting, but arises from the position taken (or not taken) between the related but different parts. For Pier Vittorio Aureli, "The in-between is at the confrontation of its parts...its existence is only decided by the parts that form the edges." "The decision (of who is friend or foe) does not exist 'as found' in between the parts, but arises from the position taken by the parts that form the space." (Aureli, 2008, 109) As soon as one defines the interstitial territory (whether through boundaries, limits, distinction, etc.) one defines relationships (personal, community, individual, etc.).

How can architecture understand and re-imagine this space in order to leverage a more dynamic and defined relationship between individuals? What consequence will these actions have on the articulation of the whole? These questions are examined through the interstitial territory in terms of existing models of part to whole relationships in urbanism and architecture.

Grid

The grid (Figure 1) is a network which defines the relationship between individuals through a structure which allows for freedom and coexistence of difference through equalizing difference. Where the Greek Polis tended to be self-contained and insular, the Roman Empire utilized an expansionist logic. The Romans used the organisational model of the urbs, a proto-grid network of all-inclusiveness and infinite aspiration based on a template that could accept different parts and reproduce endlessly. The grid's structure defines and mediates the relationship between individuals and allows for freedom and coexistence of variations through equalizing the differences. However, through the nature of its own sameness, it often pacifies these relations. In referring to Hilbersiemer's Vertical City (Figure 2), Aureli states *"Its image may seem frighteningly monolithic, but it also appears to be serene, because it has eliminated any formal anxiety through the radical deployment of a generic type."* (Aureli, 2009, 11) This indifference of the relationships often results in the generic and, while diversity can occur within the grid (e.g. Manhattan), it tends toward homogeneity.

Archipelago

Isolated, defined, and programmed parts of the archipelago (Figure 3) surrounded by residual and unprogrammed spaces. For O.M. Ungers it is this residual space (the forest in the City Within a City project) which allows for a dialect to exist. The whole is defined by the way the parts react dialectically with each other thus resulting in something greater than the sum of the individual parts. The Greek polis, as body of individuals, is defined by the space that exists between the individuals or group of individuals when they coexist. In the polis the parts are clearly defined; autonomous islands that don't imply a prior condition of unity. The archipelago model introduces the threshold acknowledging that each island together makes a whole or collective. The archipelago model recognizes that there exists a space between the tension of the collective and the expression of the individual. Furthermore, the archipelago model is not dependent of a single architectural or urban gesture, but allows for the full freedom of individual islands to coexist within a collective (Schrijver, 2008, 254).

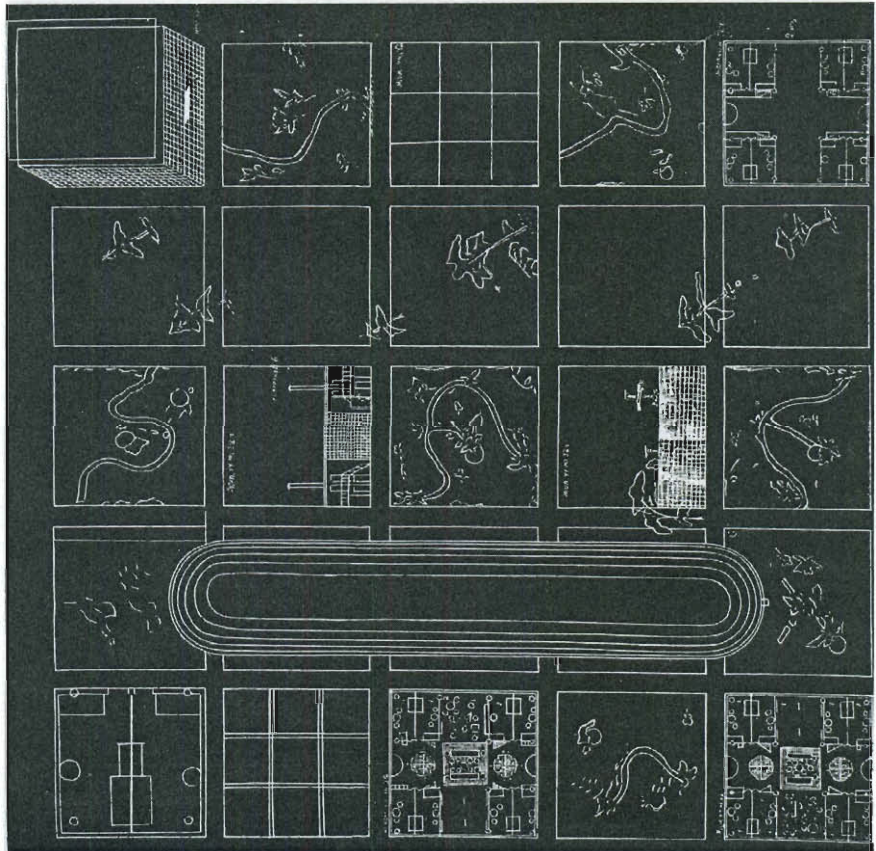


FIGURE 1: GRID Residential sector for low-rise buildings of Magnitogorsk, Proposal for a New Town by Ivan Leonidov, 1930.

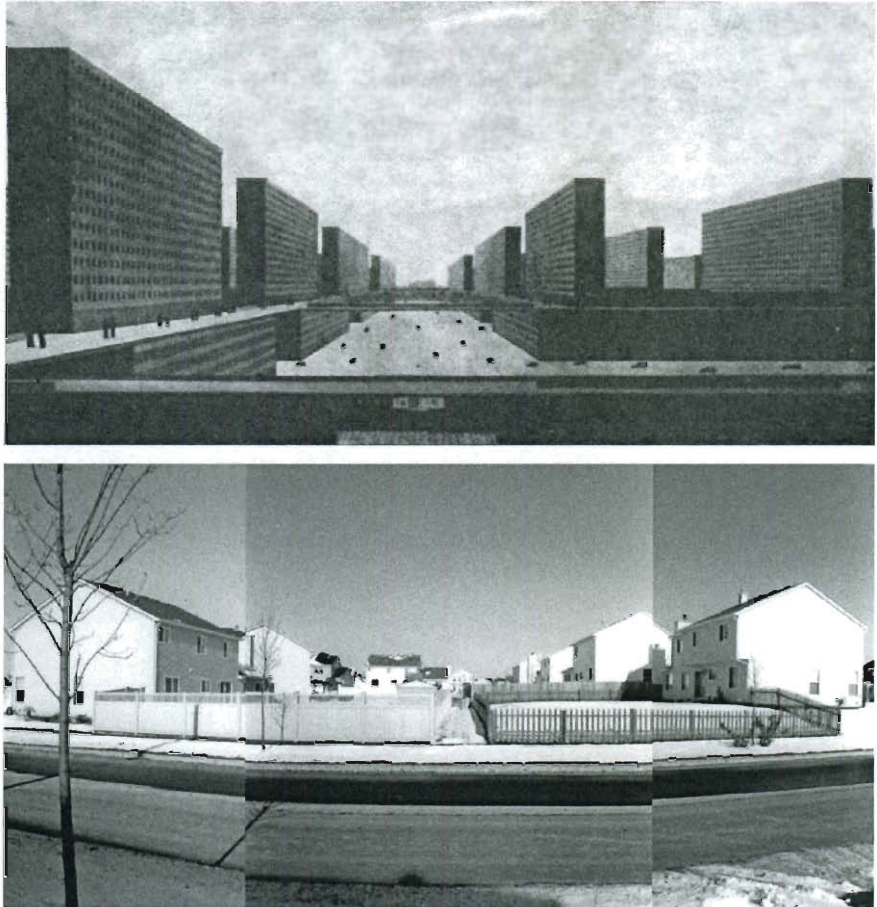


FIGURE 2: GRID In Hilbersiemer's Vertical City, 1924, (top) a grid of identical units is repeated endlessly, spatial boundaries are erased, and the individual is completely assimilated into the collective. In the suburb of Kenosha, Wisconsin, (bottom) the importance of the individual is not expressed so much through its differentiation but through spatial identity, which has been established by the grid and ignored by the architecture. Tension between the American individualism and the collective is resolved 'in pacifying it with equalizing difference' evident in the early modern repetitive totalizing of modules and the homogenizing sameness of late modernisms Livittowns (Whiting, 2009,19)

Städte in der Stadt

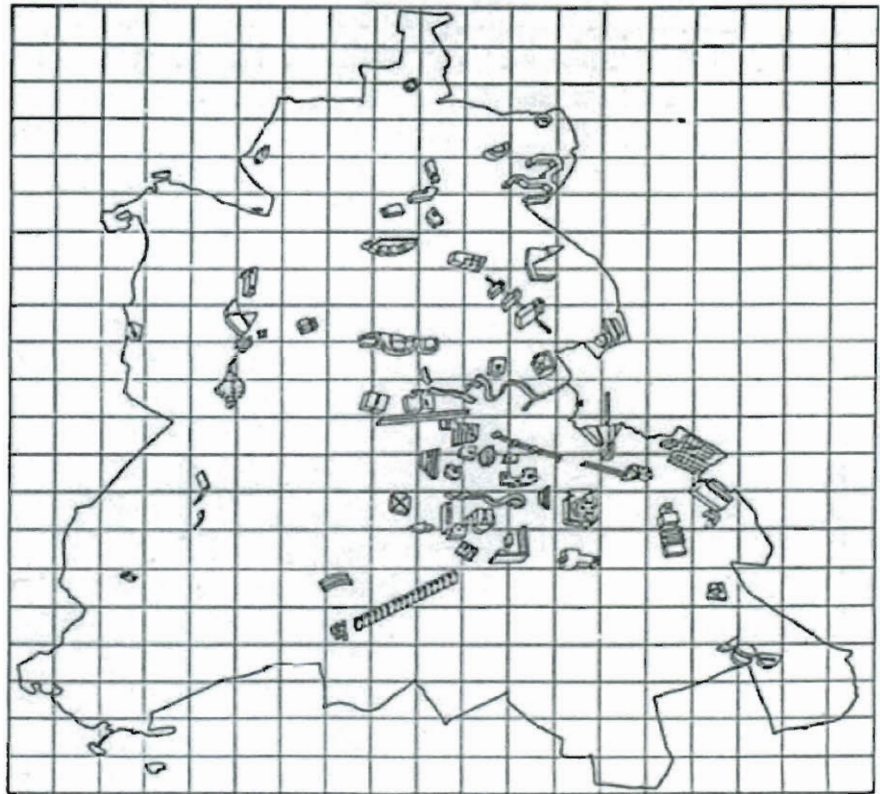


FIGURE 3: ARCHIPELAGO City Within a City: Berlin as an Archipelago, O.M. Ungers, Rem Koolhaas, Peter Riemann, Hans 1978. The project consists of dense urban artefacts surrounded by a forest (a natural grid) that gradually takes over empty parts of the city. The whole is defined by the way the parts react dialectically with each other thus resulting in something greater than sum of the individual parts.

Bounded Field

In a bounded field (Figures 4,5,6) the relation between the parts is neither hierarchical or predetermined by any conceptual center to organize the parts. Nor are the parts required to be homogenous or even complete within themselves - the whole is created through the framing of the parts by the boundary. This frees the parts from any adjacent organization therefore allowing for change and indeterminacy because each is a self sufficient island, where its individual identity can exist without disrupting, yet still feeling part of the 'anonymous' collective.

Seam

The organization of the seam (Figure 7) implies a closed cell configuration in which each individual is contained or bound, similar to the archipelago. However, unlike the archipelago, the threshold between two parts is their 'shared' boundary or wall itself. There is no interstitial space to mediate or navigate between the two parts; one moves directly from individual to individual. In referencing Peter Sloterdijk *Foam Theory*, foam, like the individual unit, is exclusive, it allows us to determine 'who' we want to share borders with, no predetermined regime as is the case with the grid. Each part has complete autonomy onto itself. If we look at the composition of the closed cell like the formation of bubbles the threshold between the cells is the bubble wall itself. In its generic form there is no hierarchy and the sum of the parts is no greater than the whole. There is no neutral (democratic) space or 'circulation' defined by the collective of individuals, therefore it must be constructed just as the private space is defined.

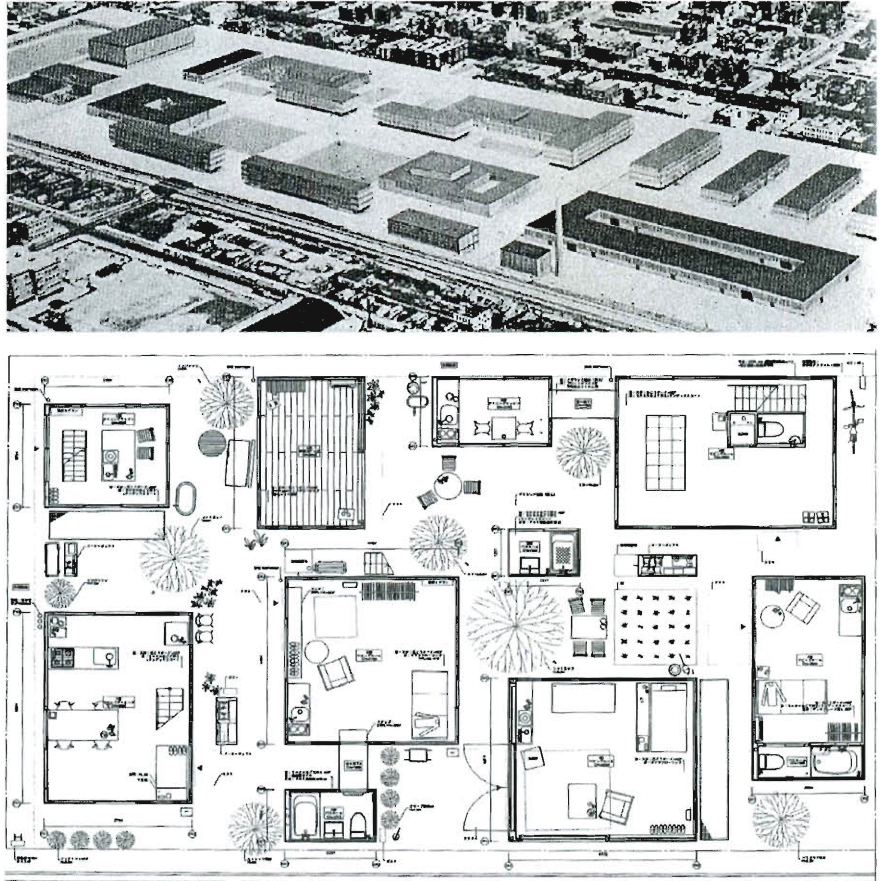


FIGURE 4: BOUNDED FIELD IIT campus plan (final scheme), Chicago, Mies van der Rohe, 1940 (top). Moriヤマ House, Tokyo, SANAA, 2005 (bottom). At an urban scale, IIT becomes a city within a city, superblock bounded by fabric of Chicago's south side. At the scale of the home, the relationships between the parts are in a constant flux, not only redefining the relationship between the parts of the home but the social unit of the family.

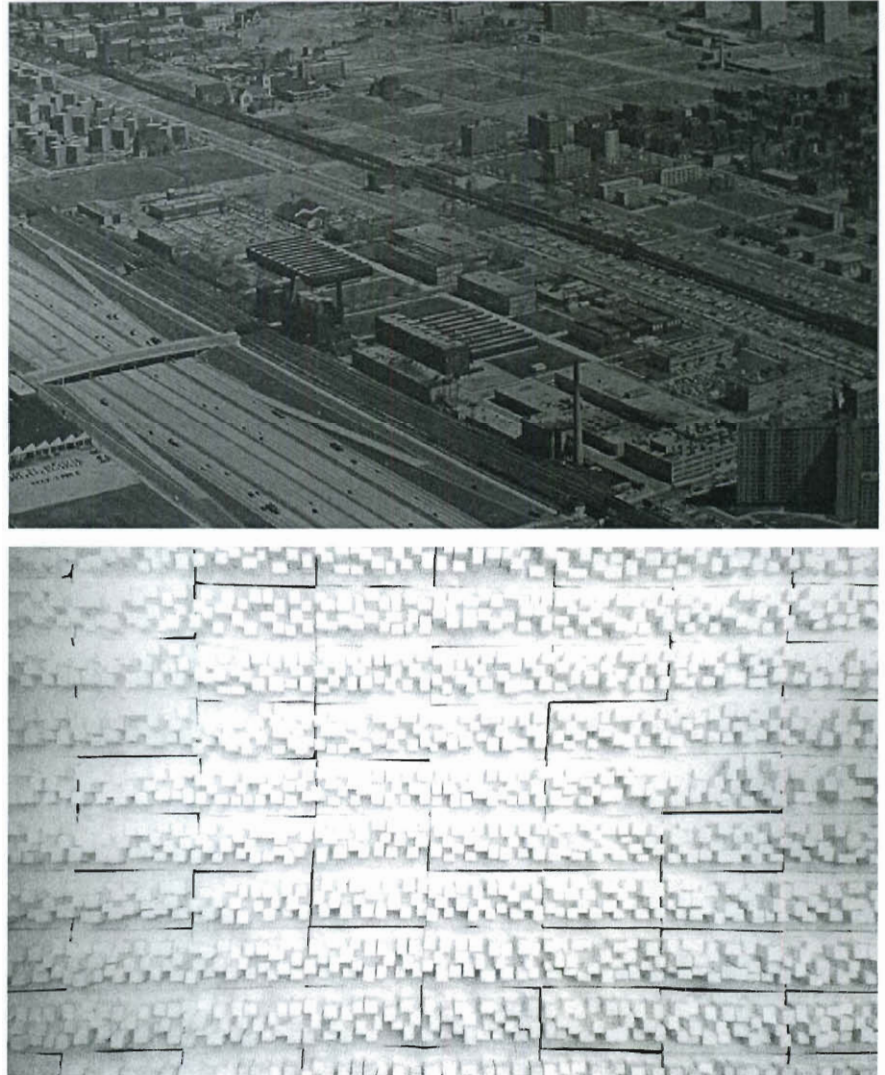


FIGURE 5: BOUNDED FIELD - BECOMES UNBOUND IIT campus, Chicago, Mies van der Rohe, 1950 (top). Moriyama House models, SANAA, 2005 (bottom).

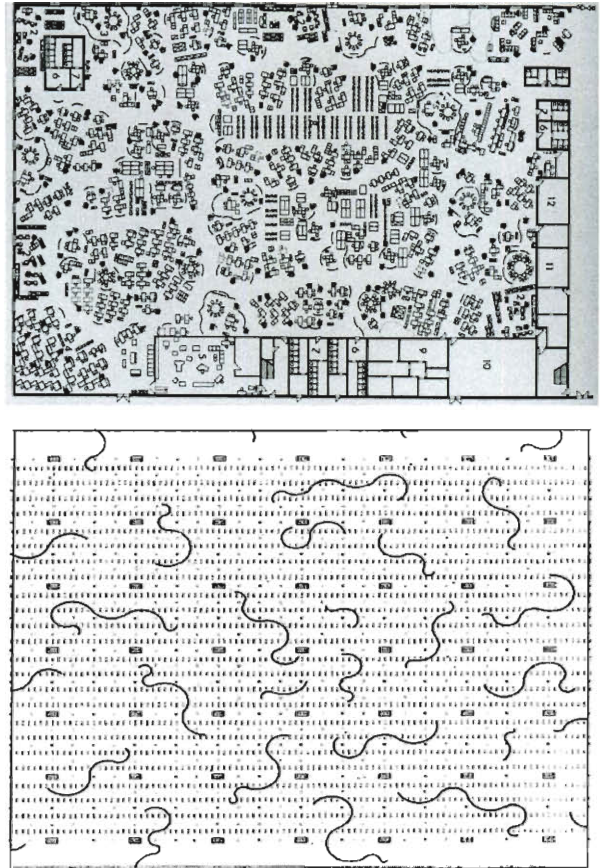


FIGURE 6: BOUNDED FIELD In a fundamental shift in the design of the office environment, the Bürolandschaft, or office landscape, the German Quickborner Team, 1963-4, (top) the organization becomes no longer about object but a field of relationships. "By dissolving the walls of the traditional office building with its myriad small, private offices and central corridors, in favor of vast open spaces populated by whirling workstations, the Quickborner team recast the office as a dynamic parallel processing machine." (Hookway, 1999, 61) At the extreme, in No Stop City, Archizoom, 1969 (bottom) the distinction between parts is dematerialized to the point where boundaries or limits cease to exist, the threshold is erased. With no limits or boundaries it can become a continuous homogenized surface, while at the same time freeing the individual from traditional relationships of individual and collective.

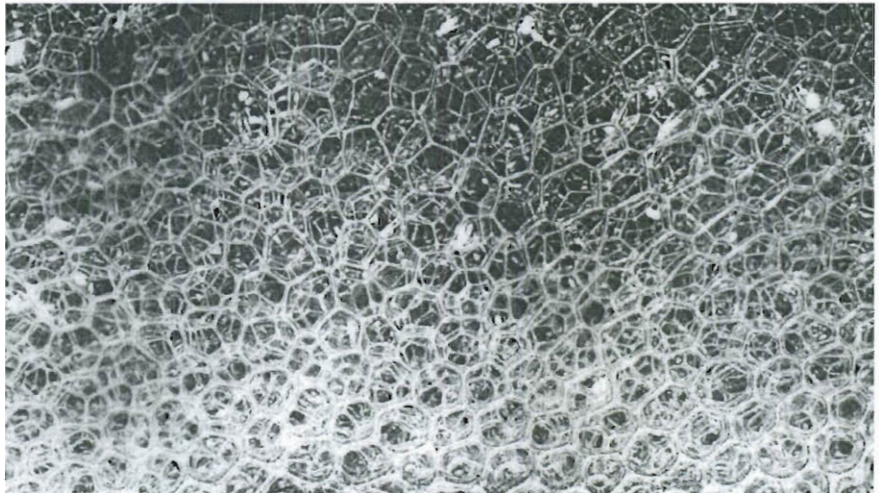
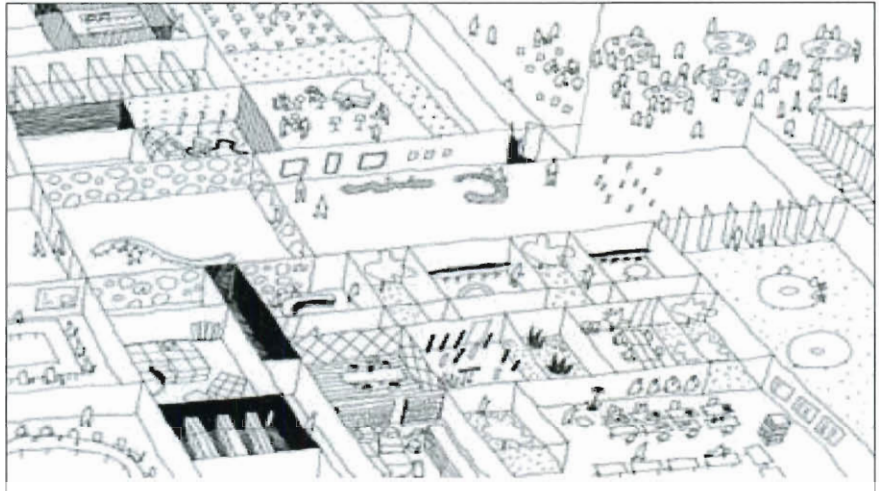


FIGURE 7: SEAM De Kunstlinde Theatre and Cultural Center, The Netherlands, SANAA (top). A continuous set of rooms where there is no corridors, hierarchy or apparent structure.

INTRA-SYSTEMS: GENERATIVE DEVICES FOR DESIGN

Where the Inter-systems identifies the interstitial space within existing organizational structures, the Intra-system (figure 8) identifies devices for further intervening within the interval. These conditions - Plinth, Cut, Material Agency, Registration, Thickened Edge, and Perception - become hybrids of the initial four organizations.

Plinth

The plinth (Figure 9) allows for asymmetry, nonlinearity, and indeterminacy of the individual independent of the collective organizer or grid as is the case in the OMA's City of the Captive Globe. The plinth is a hybrid condition of an island within a grid. It creates an autonomous territory and mediates between the grid and the architecture thus freeing up the architecture to be independent of the grid and released from its relationship to the original context. Leon Krier's Labyrinth City acts as a reverse plinth and becomes a collective organizer, creating cohesion within the bounded condition. Here, the individual buildings enter into a more dynamic relationship with each other independent of the context.

Cut

The cut (Figure 10), whether across the surface as with the main stairs of the Sejima's Gifu Apartment Building or through a seam condition as in OMA's Exposition Universelle, defines public space independent of the organization of the individual parts.

Material Agency

Through reflection, transparency, and solid, materials (Figure 11) contradict each other and thus can further distort the reading of the unity of the space. This is in contrast to a 'classical' derived form where the viewer is meant decipher the relationships between the parts and connect each part to a coherent whole. The bounded surface organization of Mies's Barcelona Pavilion keeps this relationship between the different parts in a constant flux as one moves through the space. The relationships are further blurred by the disparate material specificity of the parts. (Hays, 1985)



FIGURE 8: GENERATIVE DEVICES Movie set from Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* (1990). A coat of paint and a few birdbath props turns this real suburban neighbourhood into a fabricated reality.

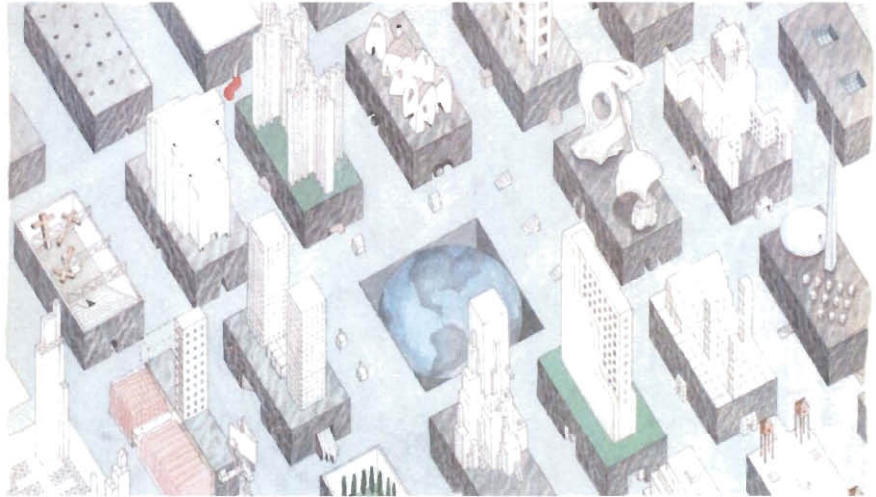


FIGURE 9: PLINTH The City of the Captive Globe, Rem Koolhaas, 1972 (top). Labyrinth City, Leon Krier's, 1971 (bottom).

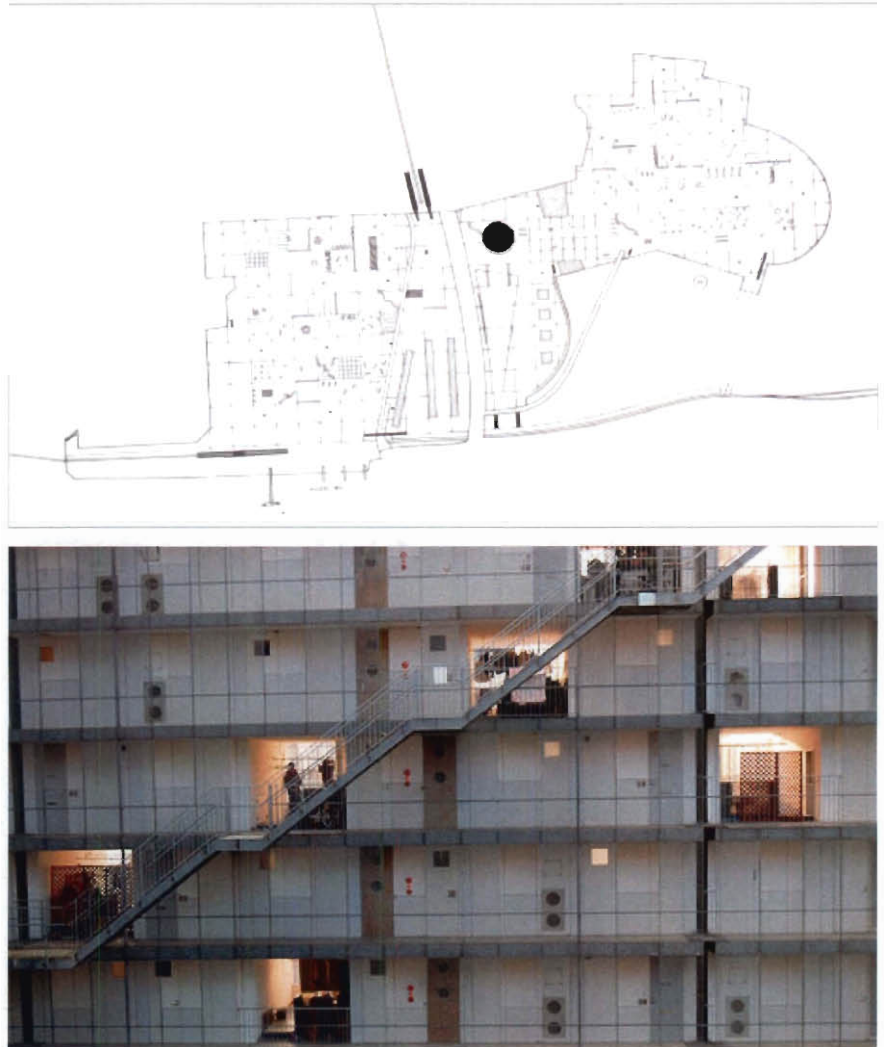


FIGURE 10: CUT Gifu Apartment Building, Japan, Kazuyo Sejima, 1998 (top). Exposition Universelle, Paris, France. OMA, 1989 (bottom).



FIGURE 11: MATERIAL Barcelona Pavilion, Mies van der Rohe, (top). Maison à Bordeaux, France, OMA, 1972 (bottom).

Registration

In the Gifu Apartment Building by Kazuyo Sejima (Figure 12) the 'room' - the terrace, dining kitchen, bedroom, and Japanese-style room - becomes the basic building block which are combined in a variety of ways creating multiple apartment plans and sections, which are then registered in the elevation, through voids and double height spaces. Two distinct facades are created by the plan and further varied by the 'random' configuration of units. The north facade is the more public and masks the location of individual units, which are registered on the more private south facade. The composition between the parts and voids negotiate relationships of the individual and collective both within the unit and the entire complex. A example of a more surface registration can be that of fashion. For Georg Simmel, "Fashion is the manifestation of the unresolved conflict between individual differentiation and absorption into a homogeneous structure." (Hays, 1992)

Thickened Edge

The urban condition of Cerda's Barcelona is modified by a thickened edge (Figure 13), or wall, which defines a coherent continuous architectural field in which the relationship between the parts is defined by the building opposed to the grid. The wall which makes up the parts works like a grid thus creates a homogenizing quality to the collective identity, while the diversity of the individual is interiorized. *"Mat-buildings can be said to epitomize anonymous collective; where the function comes to enrich the fabric, and the individual gains new freedoms of action through a new shuffled order, based on interconnection, close-knit patterns of association, and possibilities for growth, diminution, and change."* - Alison Smithson

Perception

In Magritte's Carte Blanche (Figure 14) the mind puts together separate and contradictory elements into a 'coherent' whole of the parts, which allows for a simultaneous presence of incongruous realities. In this concept, *coincidentia oppositorum*, borrowed by O.M. Ungers, *"The need for specificity and distinction is served by the imagination and by sensuous perception...there is a space between the intention of the designer and the reception of the user that is productive in itself."* (Schrijver, 2008, 253)

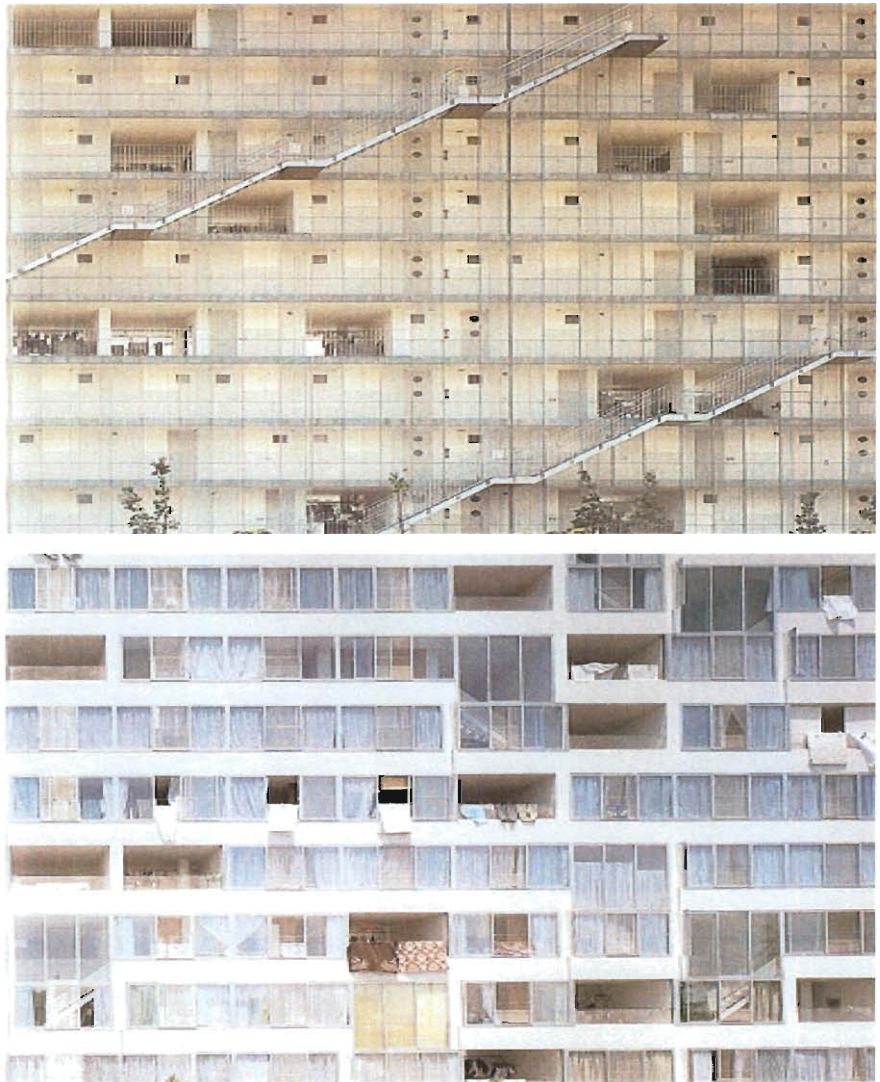


FIGURE 12: REGISTRATION Gifu Apartment Building, Japan, Kazuyo Sejima, 1998.

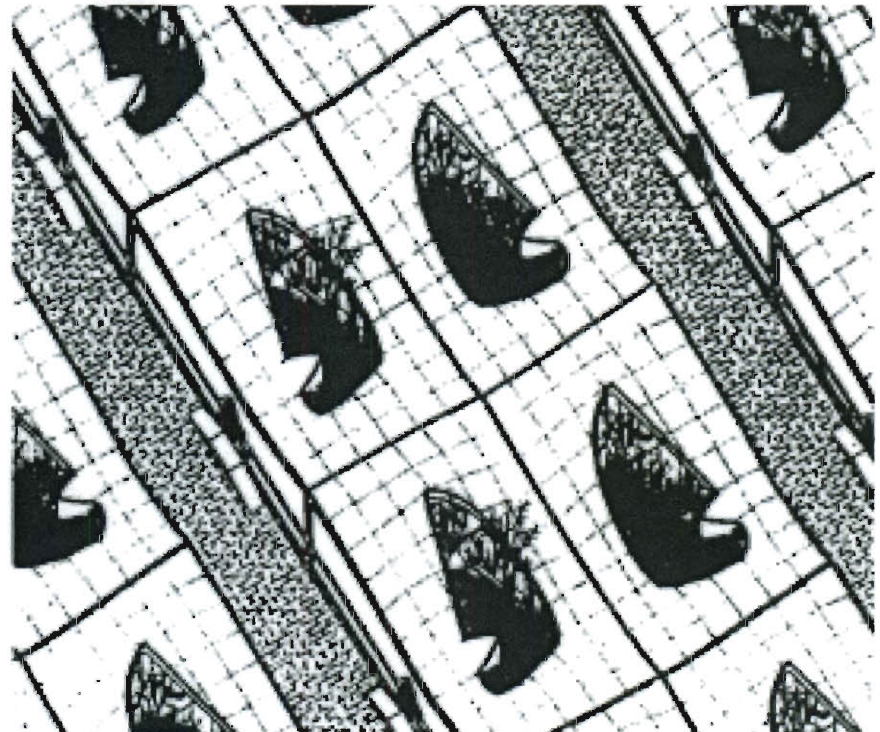
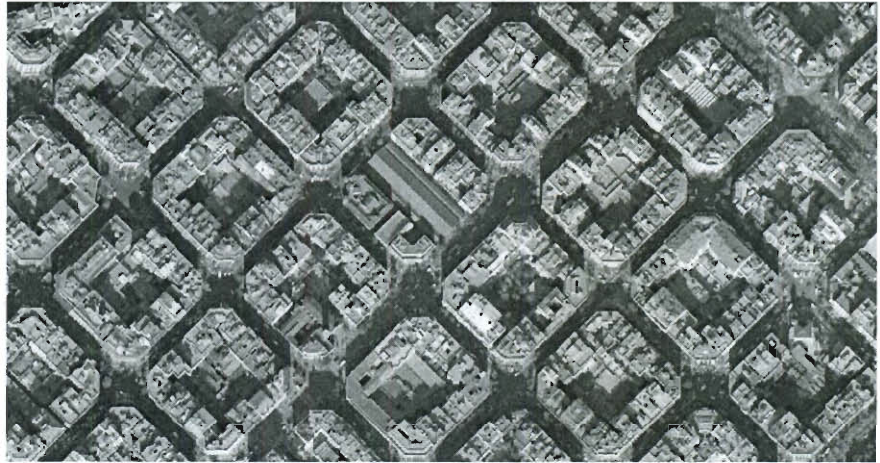


FIGURE 13: THICKENED EDGE Ildefons Cerdà, Barcelona extension, 19th c. (top). Peter Smithson, 'Fougasse Layout' for a Neighbourhood of Houses of the Future, 1955 (bottom).

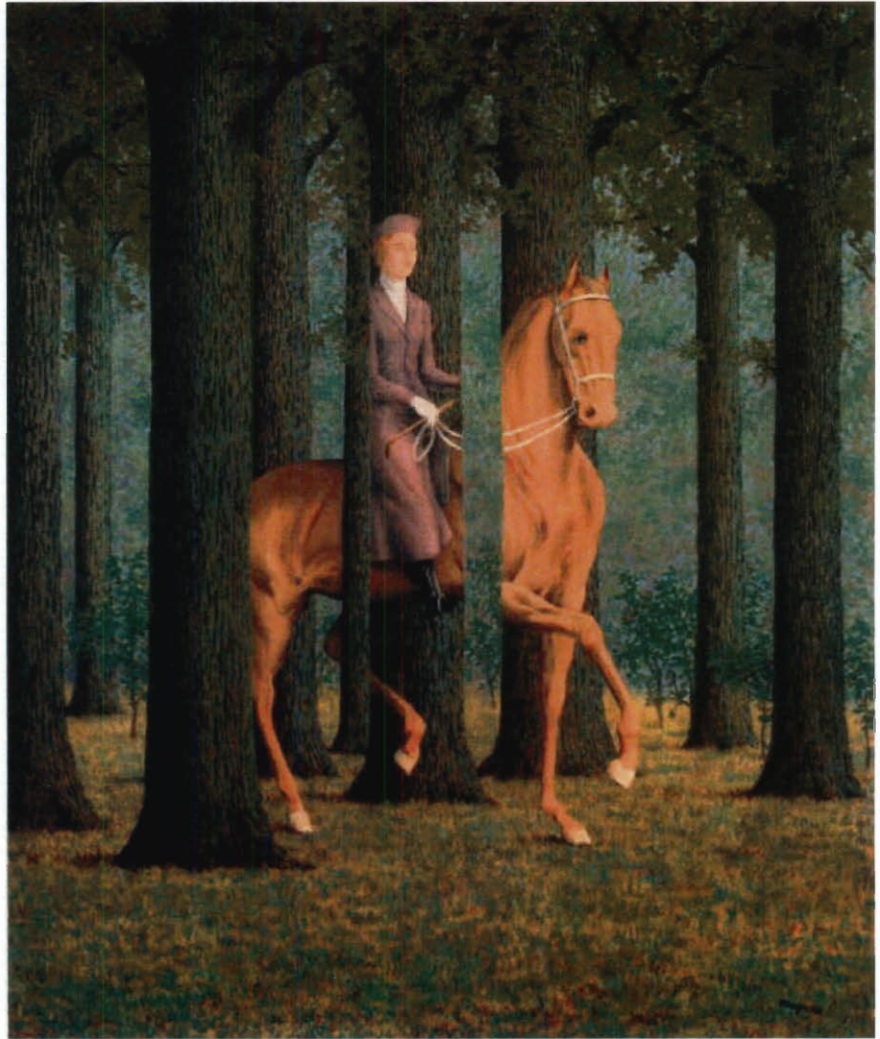


FIGURE 14: PERCEPTION René Magritte, *Carte Blanche*, 1965.

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Part 2

Design

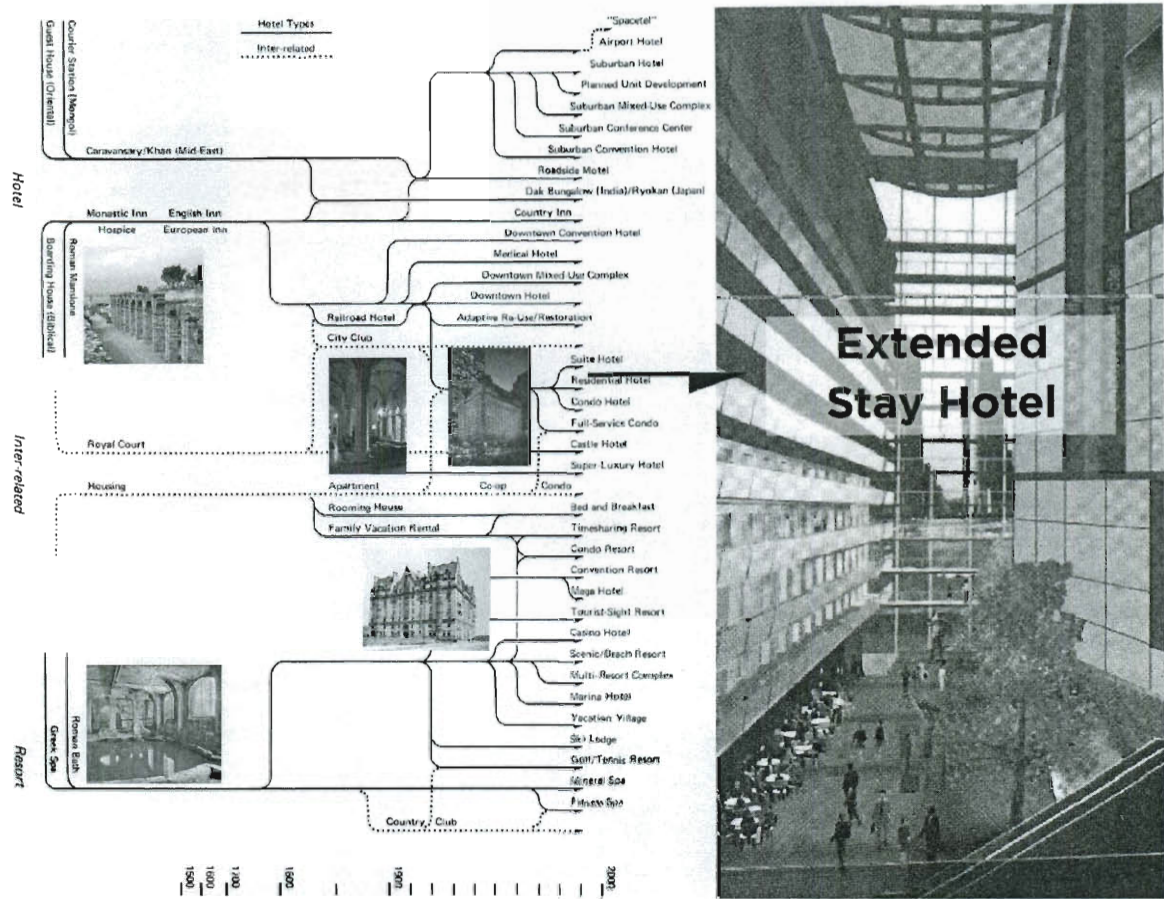
One unique aspect of the extended stay hotel typology is that as demographics of temporary populations within this dwelling type shift, relationships must constantly be renegotiated. In order to best respond to the demands of this spatial and temporal uncertainty, this project proposes how new contingent populations and their accompanying programmatic temporalities can cohabitate on the same site. The focus of this research is to leverage the latent potentials of the interstitial space between bodies in an architectural assemblage in order to activate, animate, and register relationships within a collective program.

The interstitial becomes a new spatial program, a place where relationships are both defined and exist in constant flux. To address the problems of static organizational systems and to develop alternative architecture that defines and accommodates contingent publics, ad-hoc encounters, and spontaneous social spaces, this thesis seeks to grow complexity from within the organizational system itself. Through charting a gradient of programmatic scenarios and deploying this logic into a grid, unique scenarios grow out of what is typically rigid uniformity. It is a system that is infrastructural and figural at the same time, yet still one system. Insertion of program is part of the operation of the infrastructure.



User

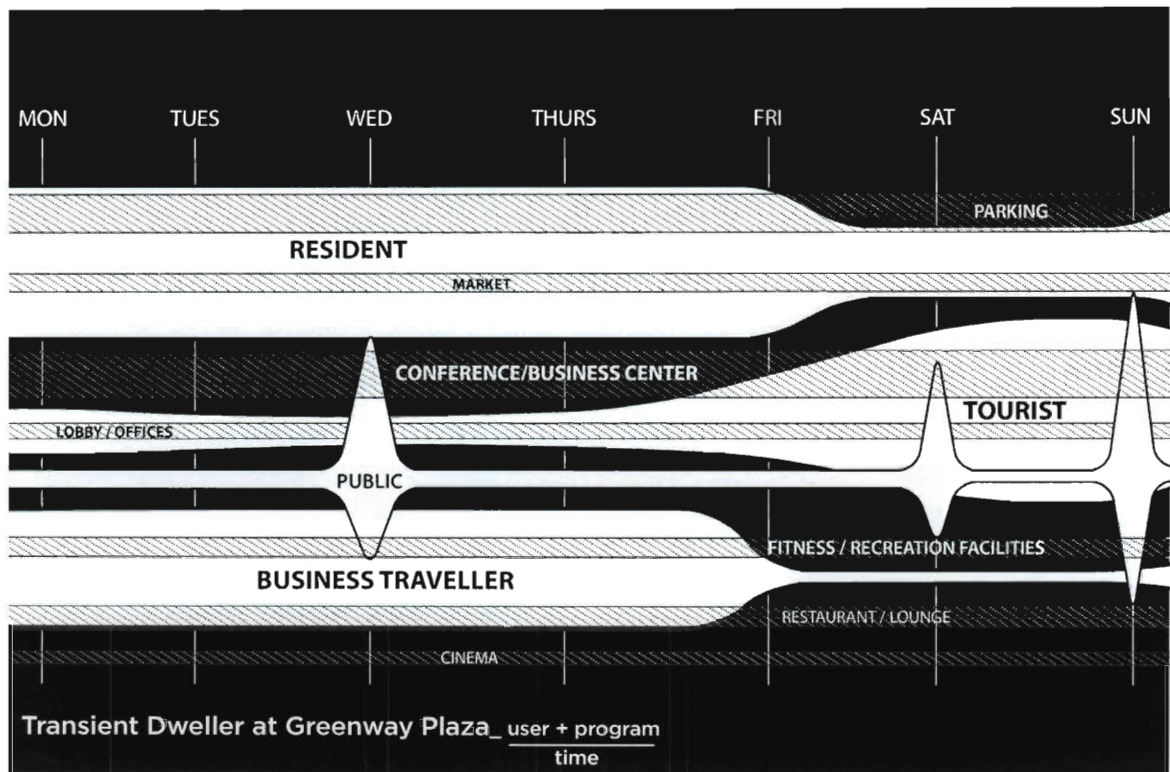
One of the symptoms of a globalized society is that ever increasingly we live mobile, nomadic lifestyles. One of the offspring is the business traveller. To a certain extent technology has conceptually shrunk our territory, linking the world more tightly, and in so doing rendered one's physical location practically irrelevant or at least in different states of permanence. This can be observed in the case of the oil rancher versus the oil executive. The transient dweller lies somewhere in-between place - e.g. home - and the traveller's space - e.g. hotel. An increasing proportion of humanity lives, at least part of the time, outside place; if not completely outside the equation of "house = home."



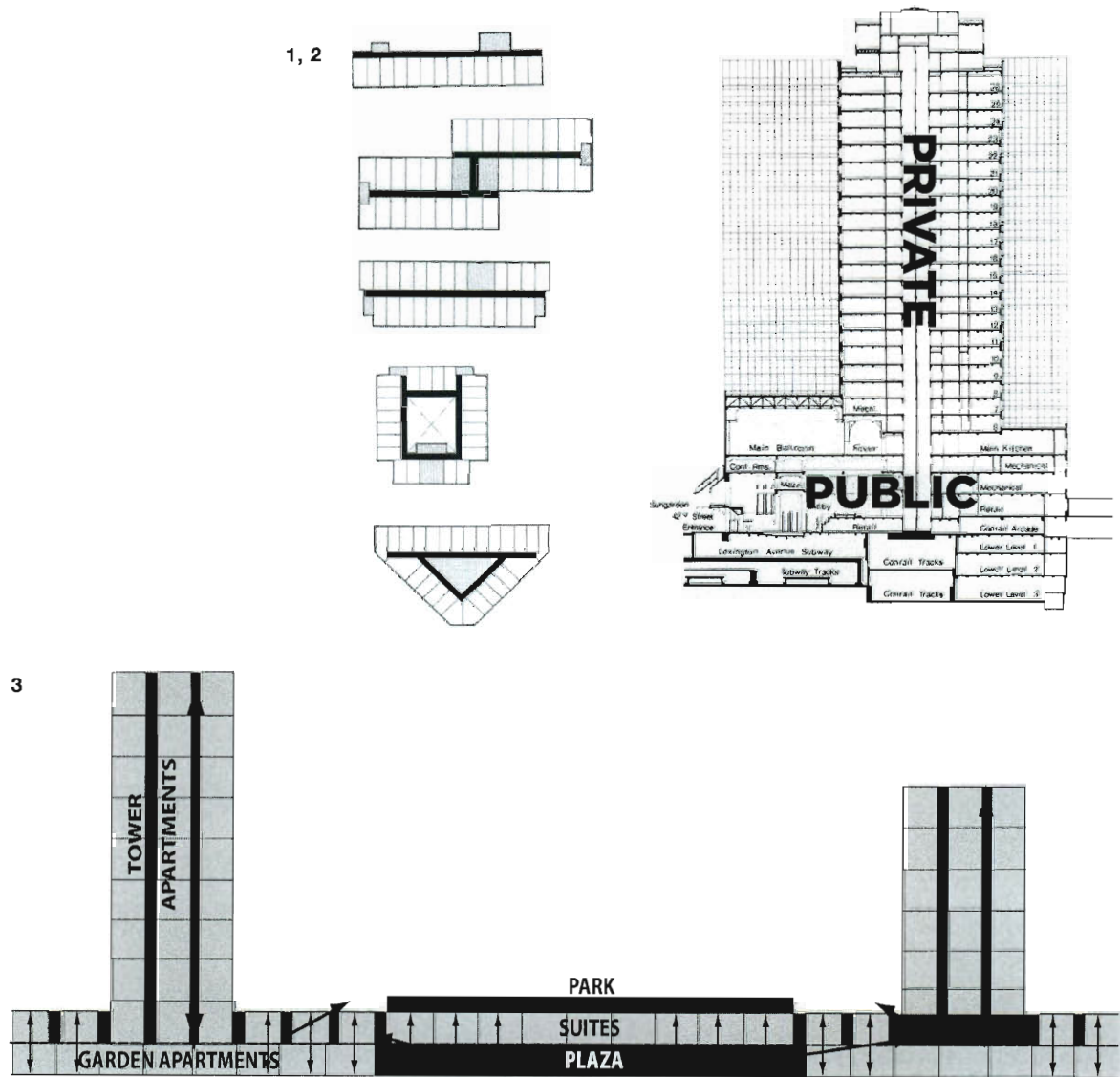
Evolutionary Tree of Hotel Types (above). Embassy Suites, Battery Park (right).

Program

The new nomadic worker has relied on the advancement of hard technology and soft technologies necessary to provide access to physical and virtual work environments. As the Evolutionary Tree of Hotel Type diagram (above) suggests, the extended-stay hotel type, which currently serves this population, has evolved out of housing and the hotel. This thesis foregrounds the idea that 'hard' shelter for this population - the hotel - has not fundamentally altered in form with this rapidly expanding and diverse population - and explores a new formal intervention with the Extended Stay Hotel.

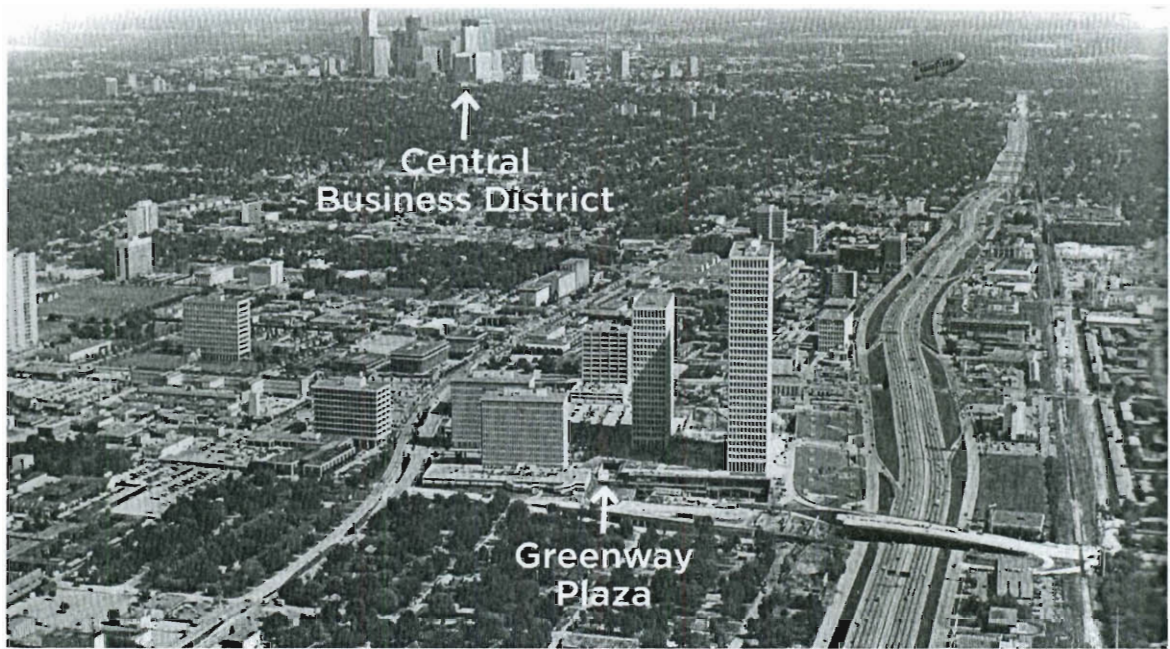


The program diagram more specifically describes how the Greenway Plaza population inhabits the site. The diagram allows for both a regular and cyclical temporality of both the program and user. When given dimension, the black represents the activity in-between - a new spatial program that attempts to address the problems of static organizational systems (that defined the more static and predictable population of the past) and to develop alternative architecture that defines and accommodates contingent publics, ad-hoc encounters, and spontaneous social spaces.



There is a disjunction between the current models of organization (1) and this population described previously. Here the section (2) is reduced to singular separation of public and private (typically connected by an atrium) and the typical guestroom floor is only reduced to a corridor and everything has the exact same relationship to that hallway and each other - through the wall or floor.

(3) Responds to the dynamic relationships of public and private that exists between these populations and accommodate: The subject - business traveller - is not quite public, not quite private. The program - extended stay hotel - not quite public, not quite private. And the spatial condition - not quite public, not quite private.

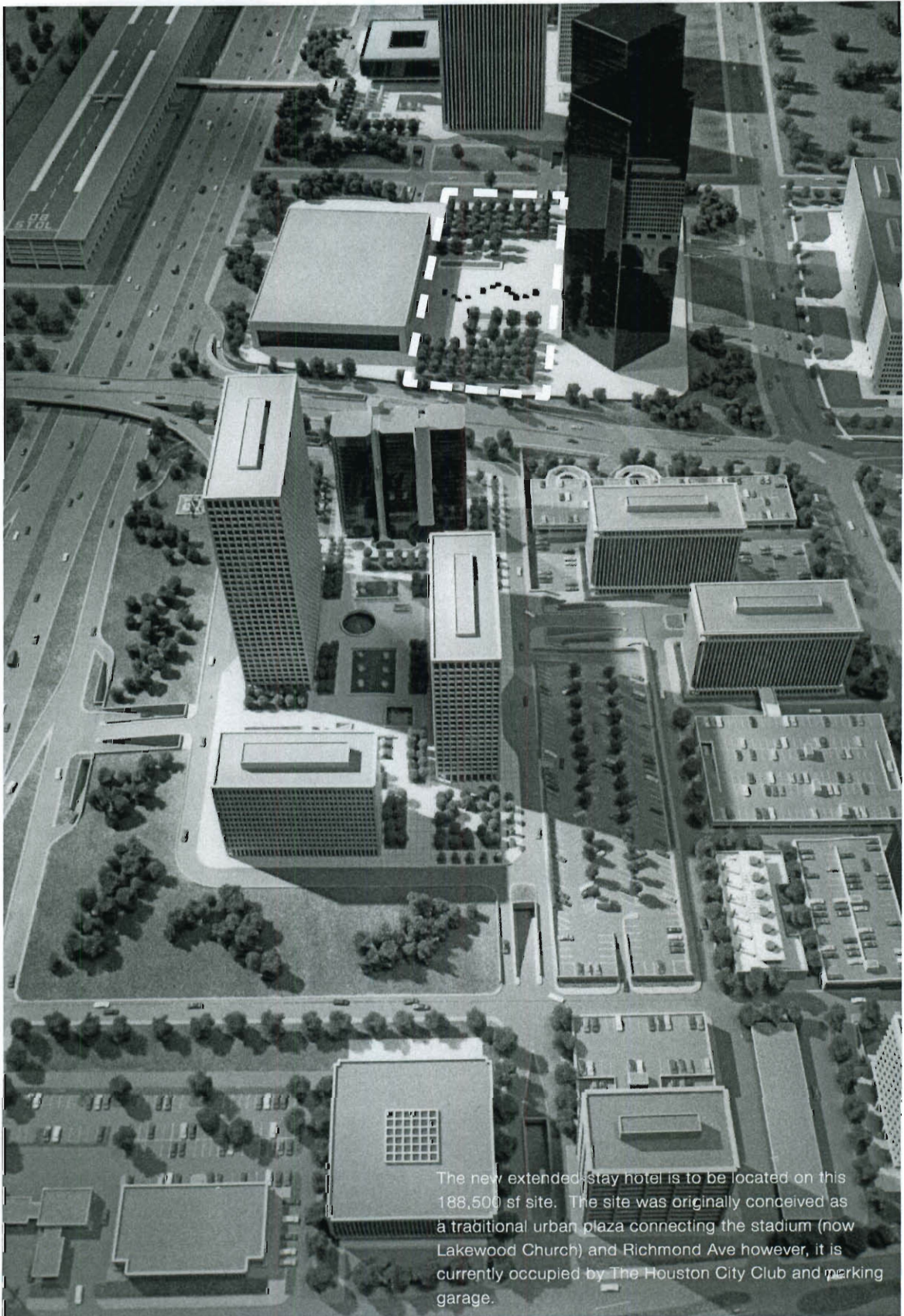


Suburban Business District Phase 1, 1970.

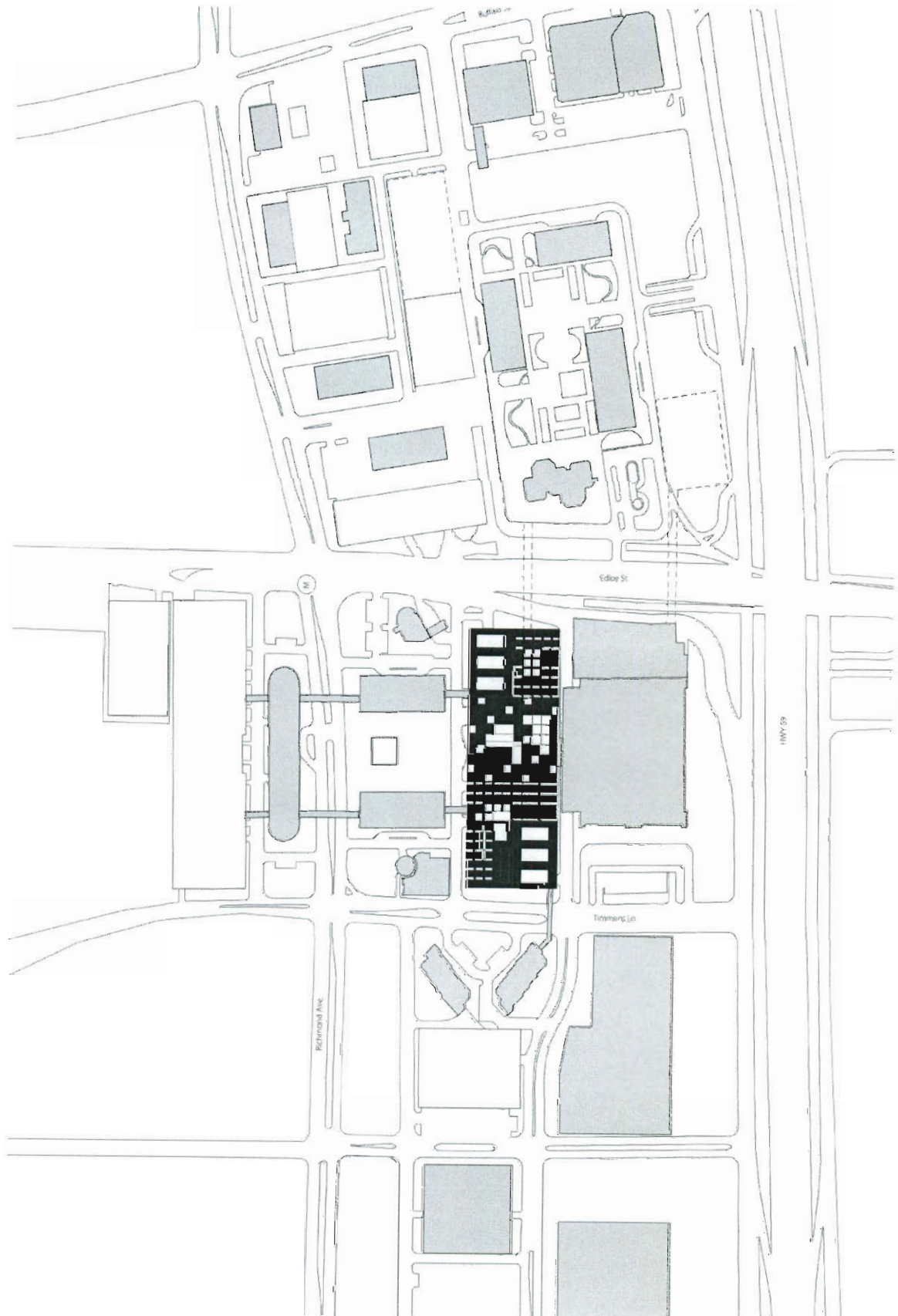
Site

The site for this thesis is Greenway Plaza in Houston, TX. Conceived of in 1968, as the new self-sufficient business city 4 miles from the Central Business District. Greenway Plaza has its own autonomous and internal urbanism. Completely connected, interiorized and private, yet surrounded by new development of retail and housing and a future metro rail line.

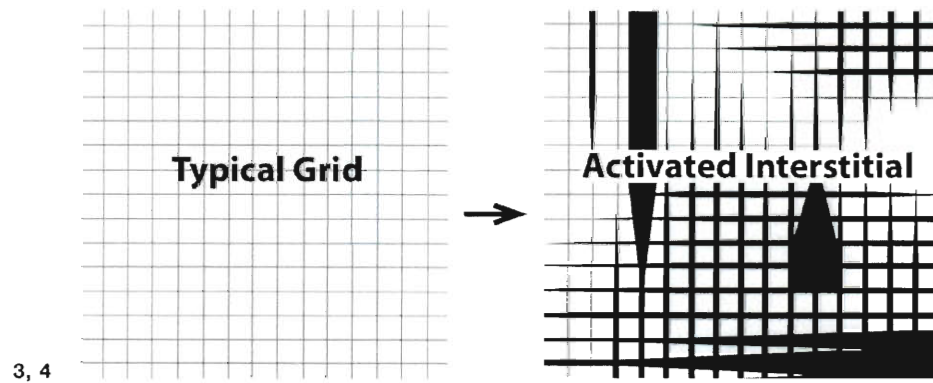
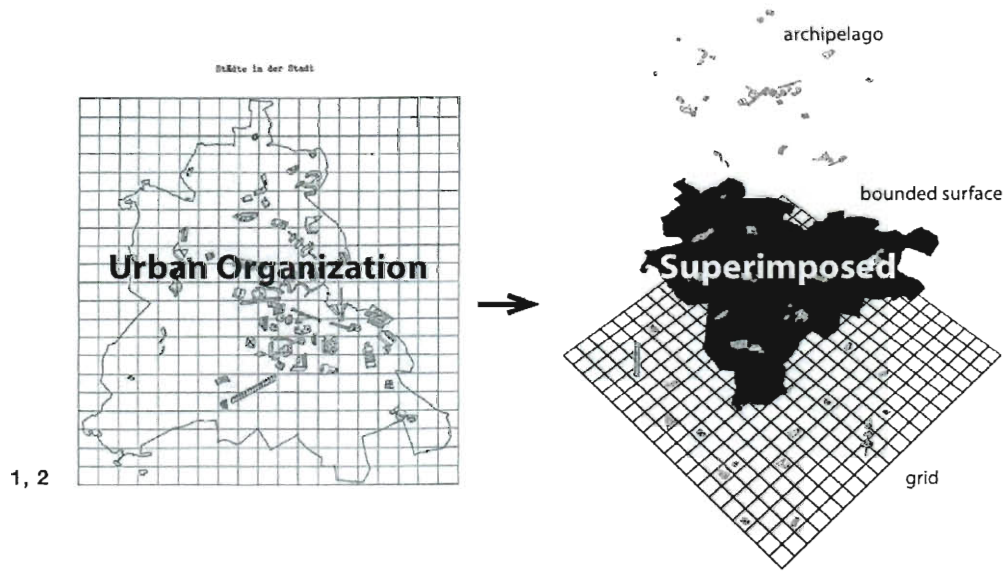
For the transient dweller, the 'host' city typically becomes the extension of their living and social space. With its workday population over 12,000 and home to many major corporations, the transient dweller of Greenway Plaza finds themselves without the amenities. The transient dwellers of Greenway Plaza find themselves also without the amenities a city center typically offers. The thesis seeks to reinvigorate the site and make a new urban core for the transient subject - a public infrastructure for an increasing transient population.



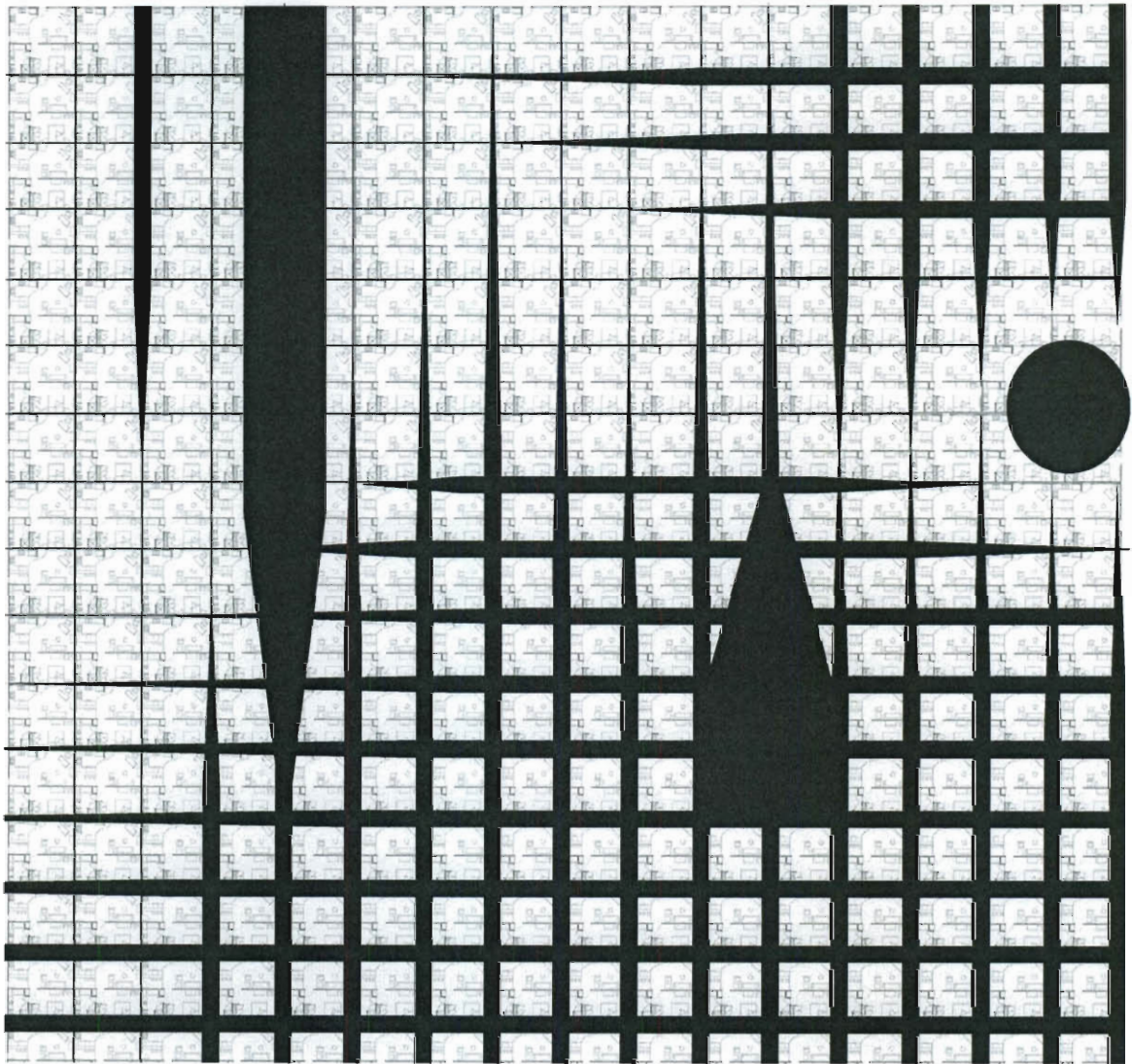
The new extended-stay hotel is to be located on this 188,500 sf site. The site was originally conceived as a traditional urban plaza connecting the stadium (now Lakewood Church) and Richmond Ave however, it is currently occupied by The Houston City Club and parking garage.



Greenway Plaza Site Plan



Evolution of Organizational Logic. Stemming from the growing complexity of an urban situation, the Berlin Green Archipelago project (1) responds to complexity through superimposing organizational systems; and (2) like a mixture the project's constituent parts can be parsed out to reveal at least 3 organizational systems (archipelago, bounded surface, and grid); (3) This thesis seeks to grow complexity from within the system itself - charting a gradient of programmatic scenarios and deploying this logic into a grid, allowing the unique scenarios to grow out of what is typically rigid uniformity (4).

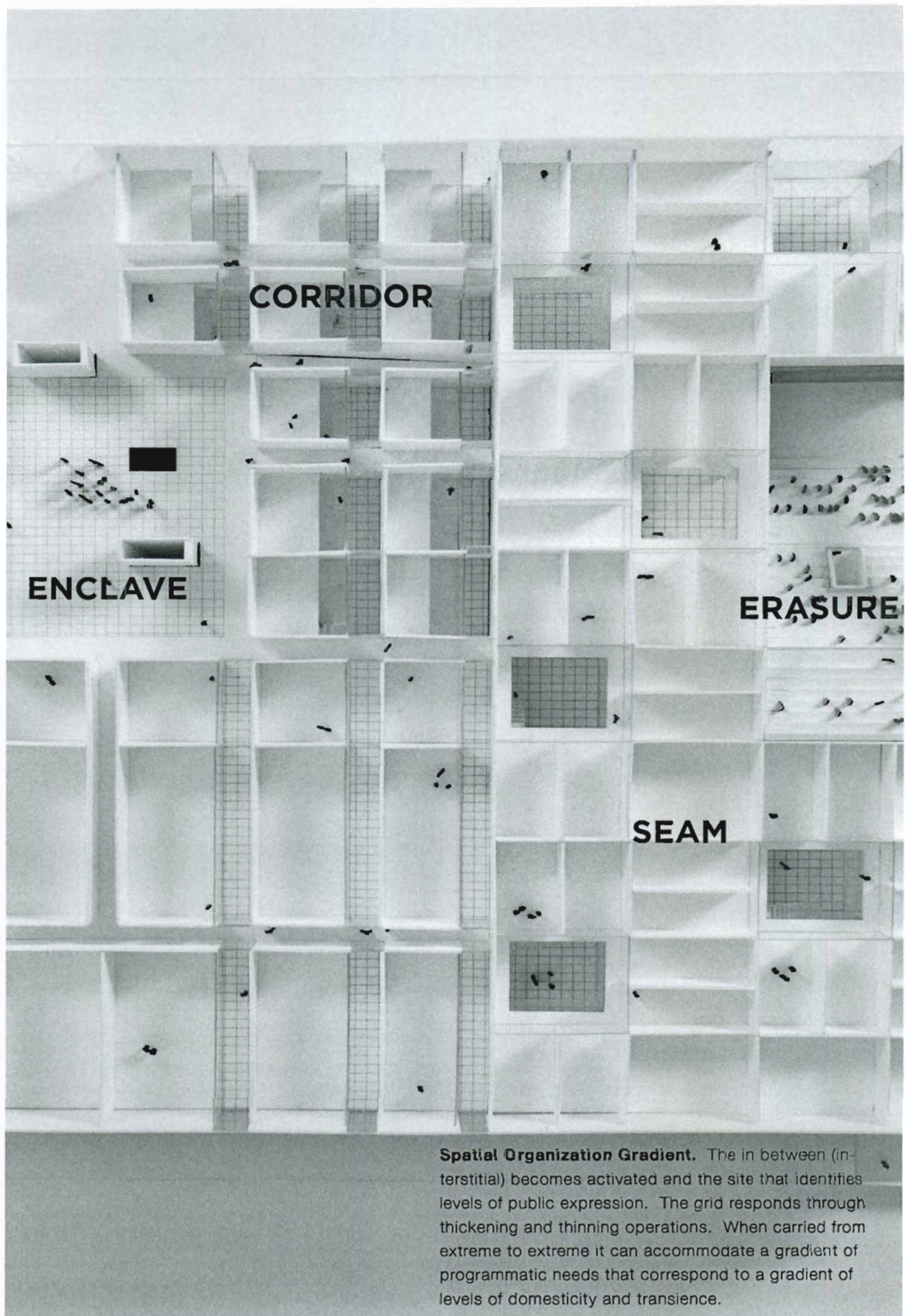


TYPICAL UNIT

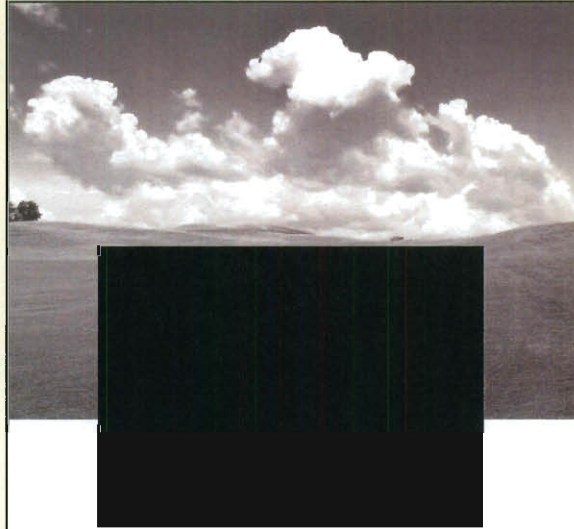
PUBLIC SPACE
PROGRAM &
CIRCULATION

'OTHER'

Activated Interstitial. The black represents the interstitial, or space between. A continuous space where relationships are both defined and exist in constant flux. Figural, but not controlled. The represents bodies in space or fixed programs. Individual parts aggregated and organized by the interstitial (i.e. black). It is a system that is infrastructural that becomes figural at the same time, that is still one system, where insertion of program is already part of the infrastructure.

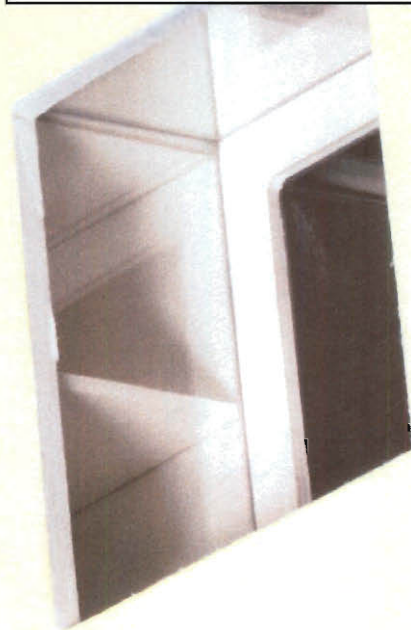


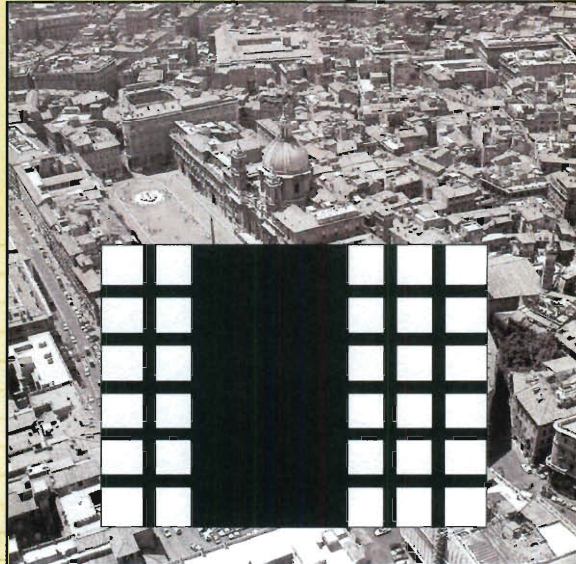
Spatial Organization Gradient. The in between (in-terstitial) becomes activated and the site that identifies levels of public expression. The grid responds through thickening and thinning operations. When carried from extreme to extreme it can accommodate a gradient of programmatic needs that correspond to a gradient of levels of domesticity and transience.



FIELD

The presence of uninterrupted and unbounded interstitial.





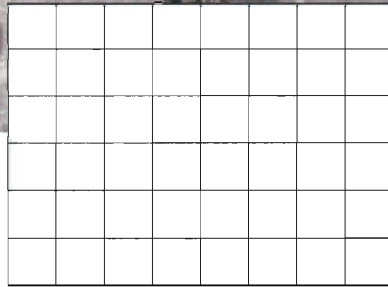
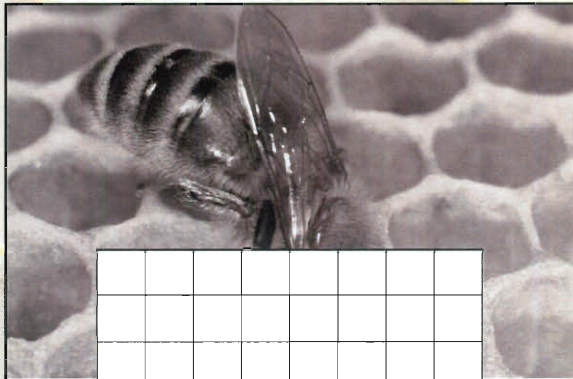
ENCLAVE

A swelling of the interstitial with a boundary defined by hard program.



CORRIDOR

A narrowing of the interstitial to bring bodies into close proximity without actually touching.



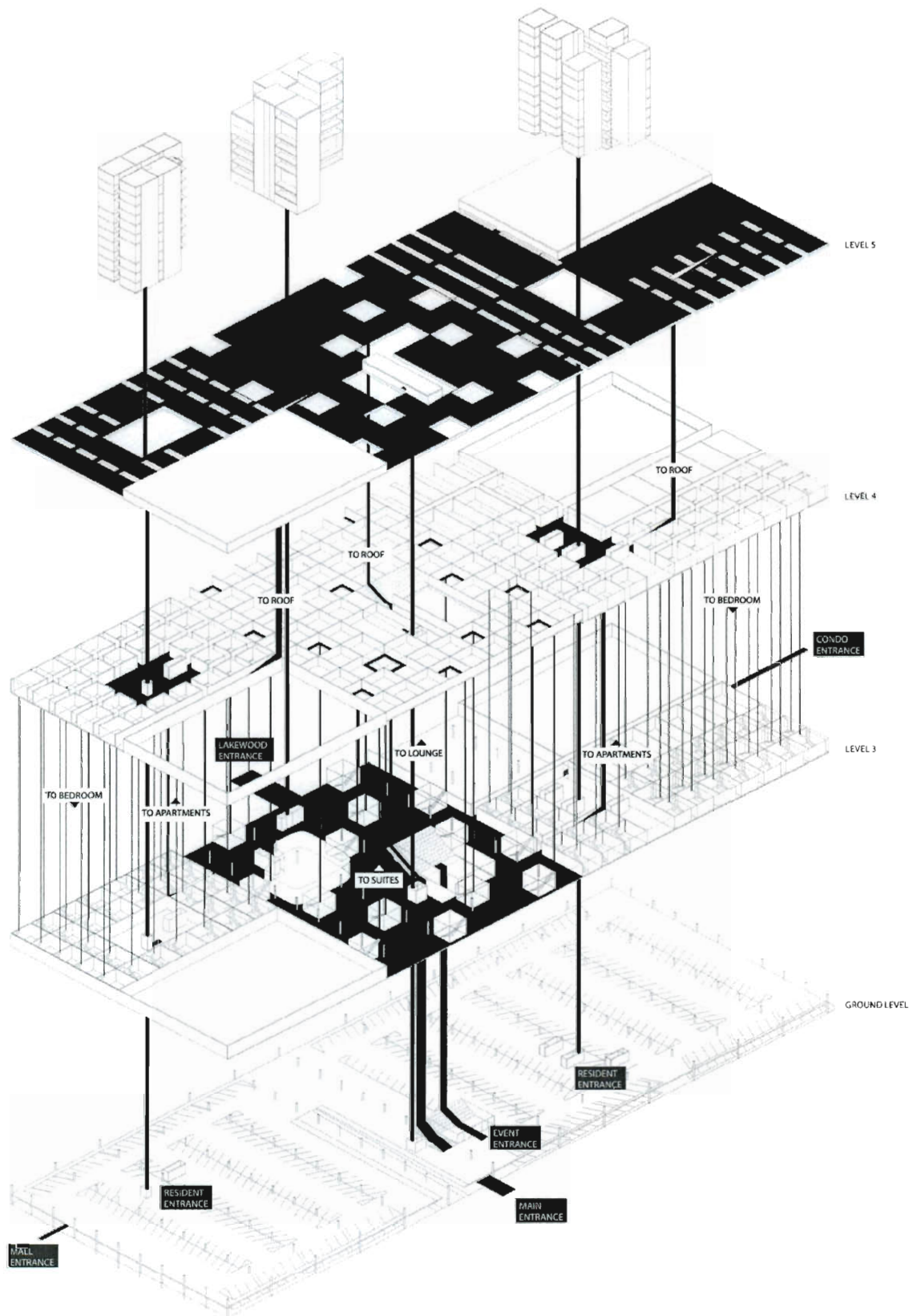
SEAM

The interstitial is reduced to a shared wall dividing tightly packed program. Boundries can build and break down as needed.



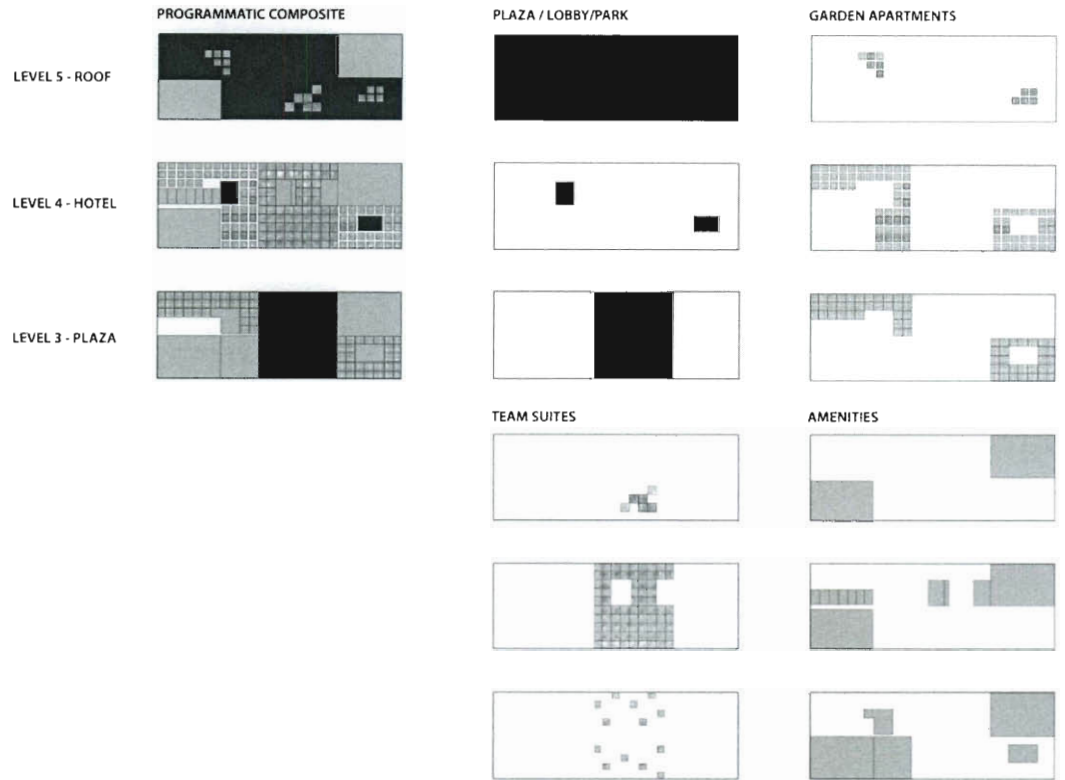
ERASURE

The interstitial begins to break down, allowing for larger programs to be inserted.

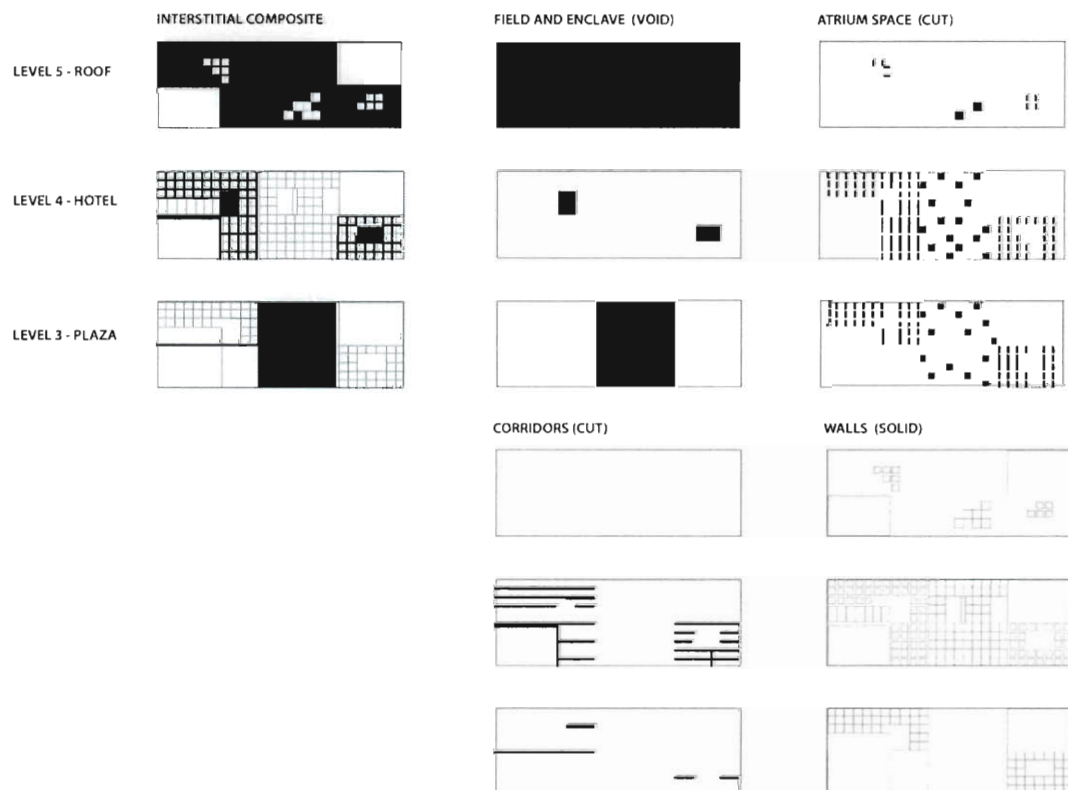


Circulation Diagram

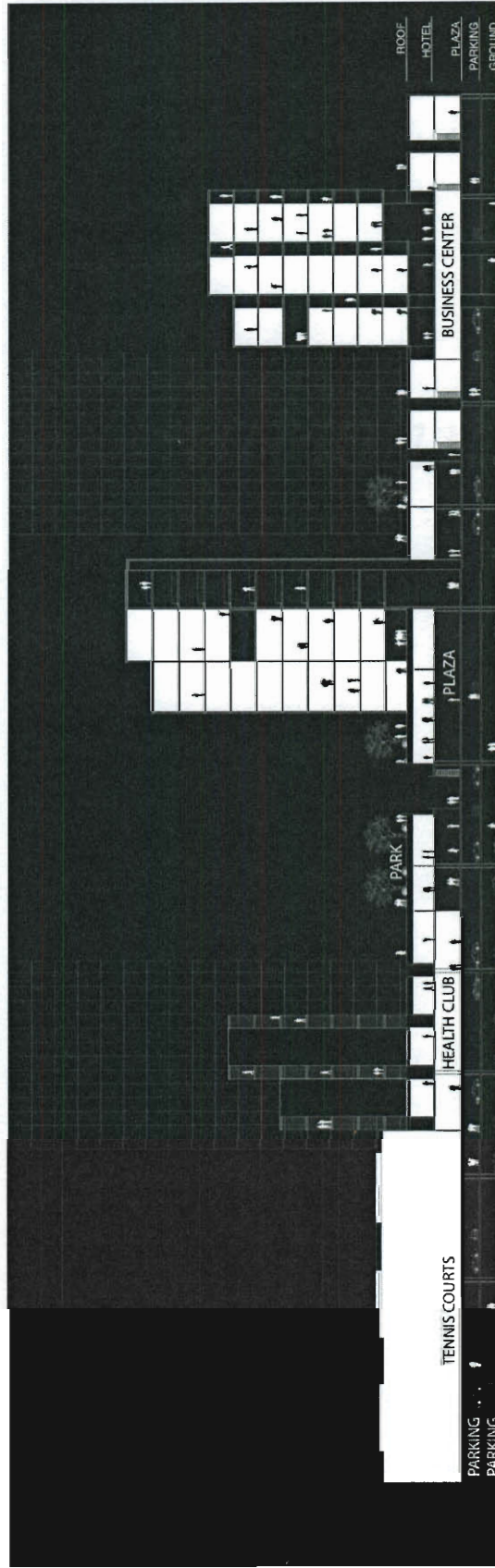
1



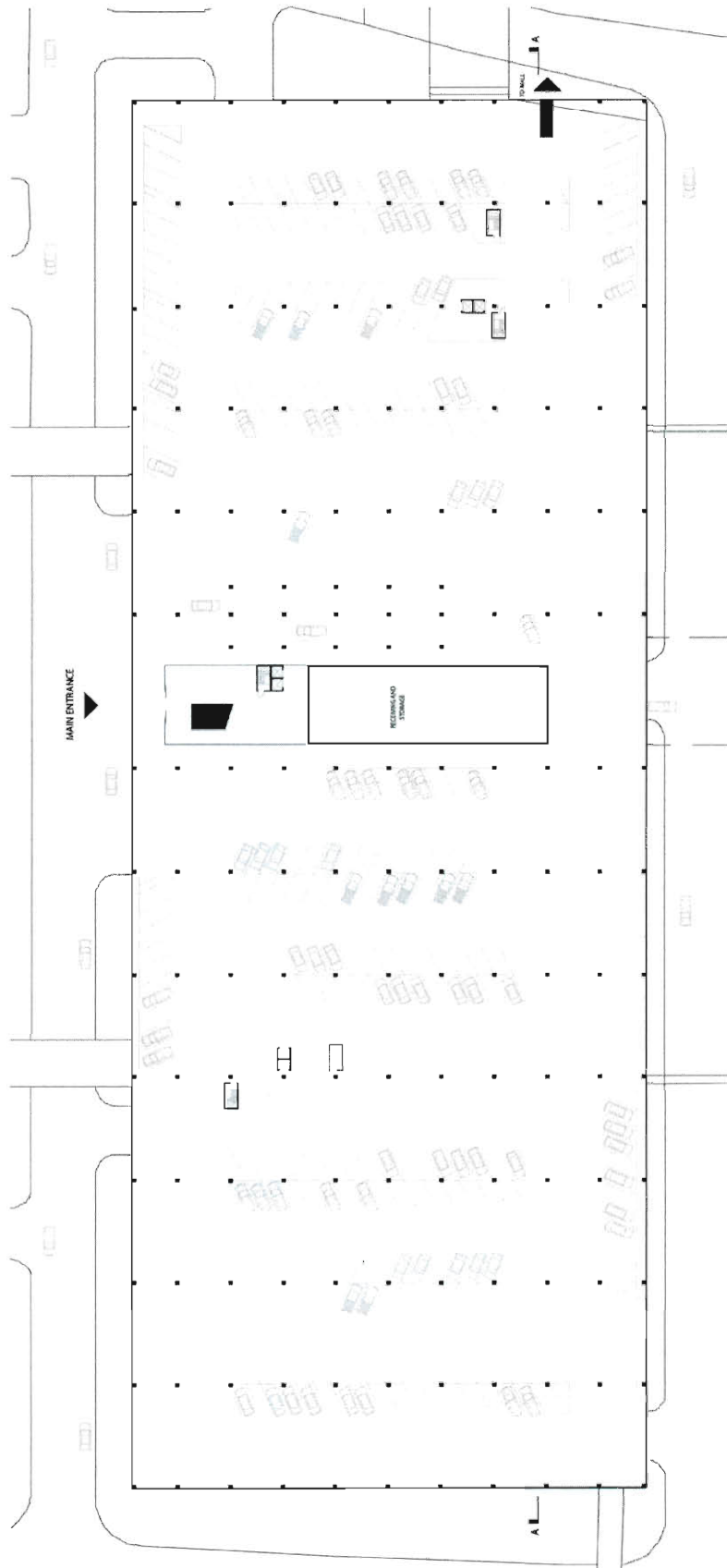
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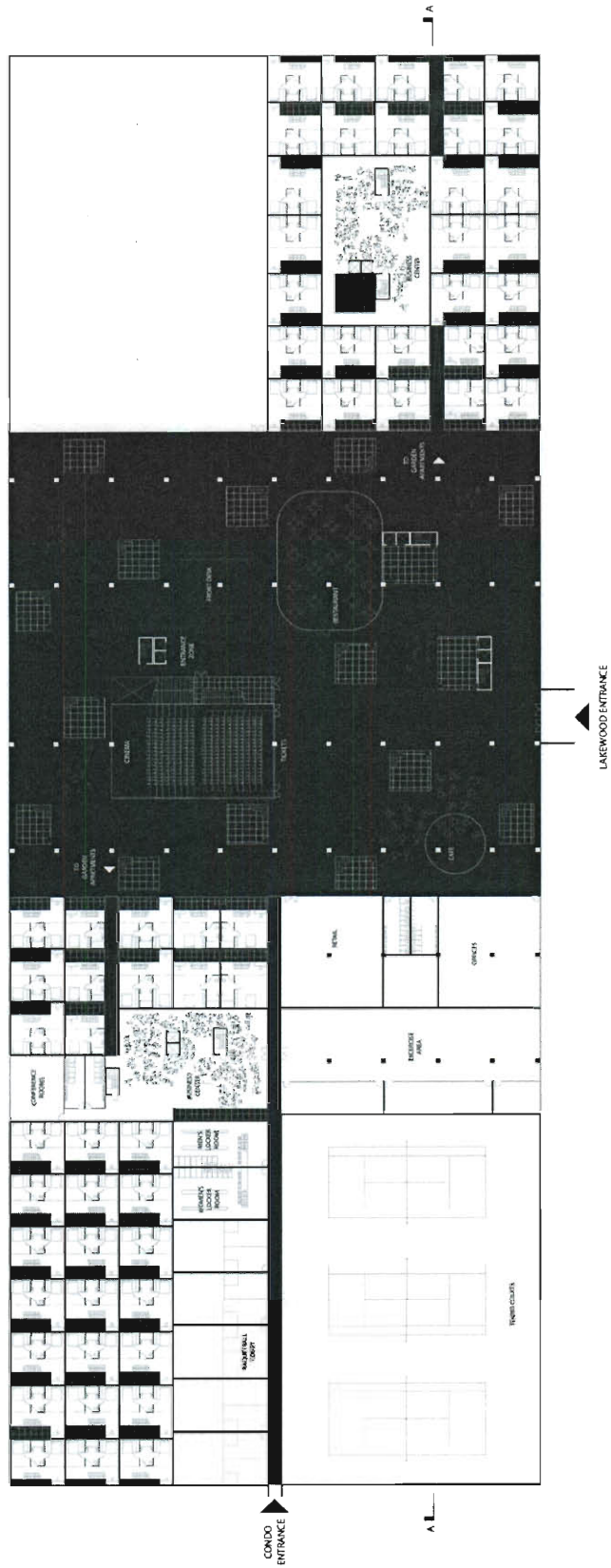
Programmatic Key (1). Interstitial space Key (2)



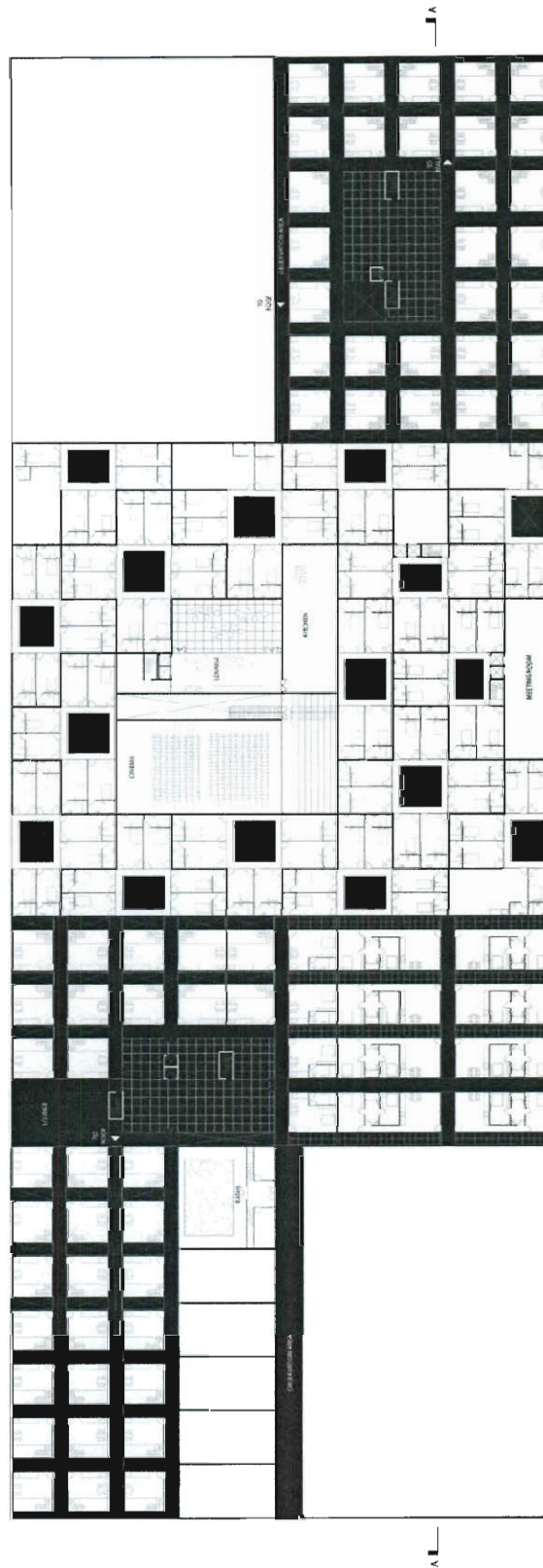
Section AA



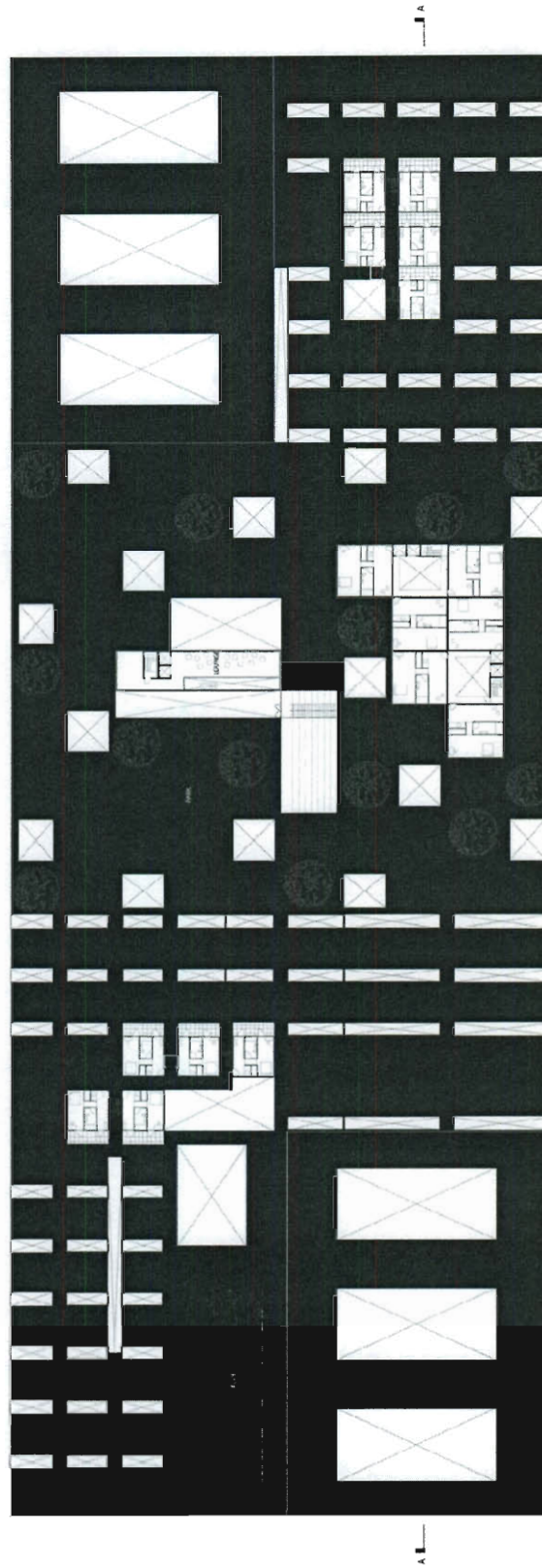
Ground Level



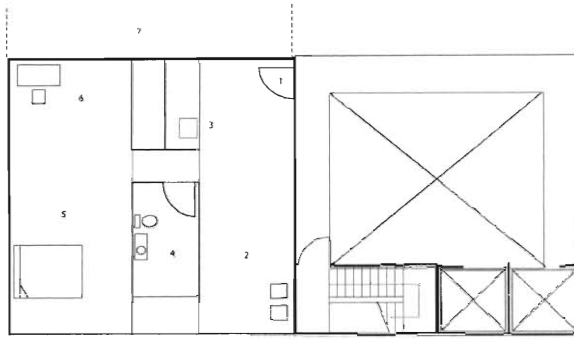
Level 3: Plaza



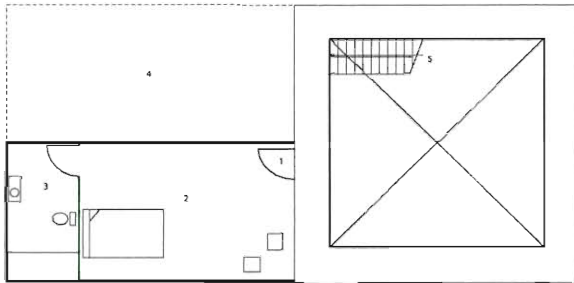
Level 4: Hotel



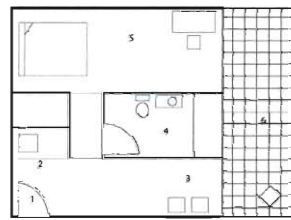
Level 5: Roof



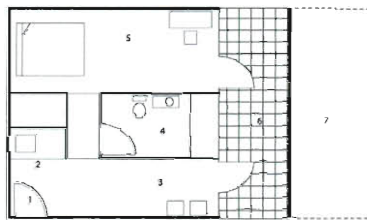
TYPICAL TOWER SUITE APARTMENT
 PLAN: 1 ENTRANCE 4 BATHROOM 7 ADJACENT SUITE
 2 LIVING AREA 5 BEDROOM
 3 KITCHEN 6 STUDY



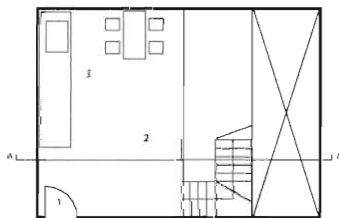
TYPICAL SUITE APARTMENT
 PLAN: 1 ROOM ENTRANCE 4 ADJACENT UNIT
 2 BEDROOM 5 SUITE ENTRANCE
 3 BATHROOM



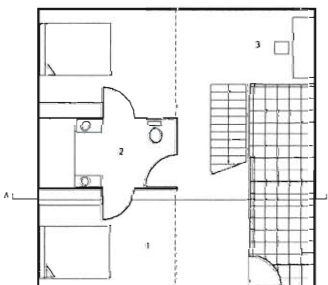
TYPICAL TOWER GARDEN APARTMENT TYPE A
 PLAN: 1 ENTRANCE 4 BATHROOM
 2 KITCHEN 5 BEDROOM
 3 LIVING AREA 6 GARDEN ROOM



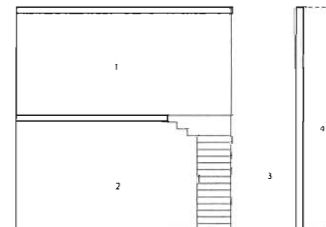
TYPICAL TOWER GARDEN APARTMENT TYPE B
 PLAN: 1 ENTRANCE 4 BATHROOM 7 ADJACENT UNIT
 2 KITCHEN 5 BEDROOM
 3 LIVING AREA 6 EXTERIOR ROOM



TYPICAL GARDEN APARTMENT
 UPPER FLOOR PLAN: 1 ENTRANCE
 2 LIVING AREA
 3 KITCHEN

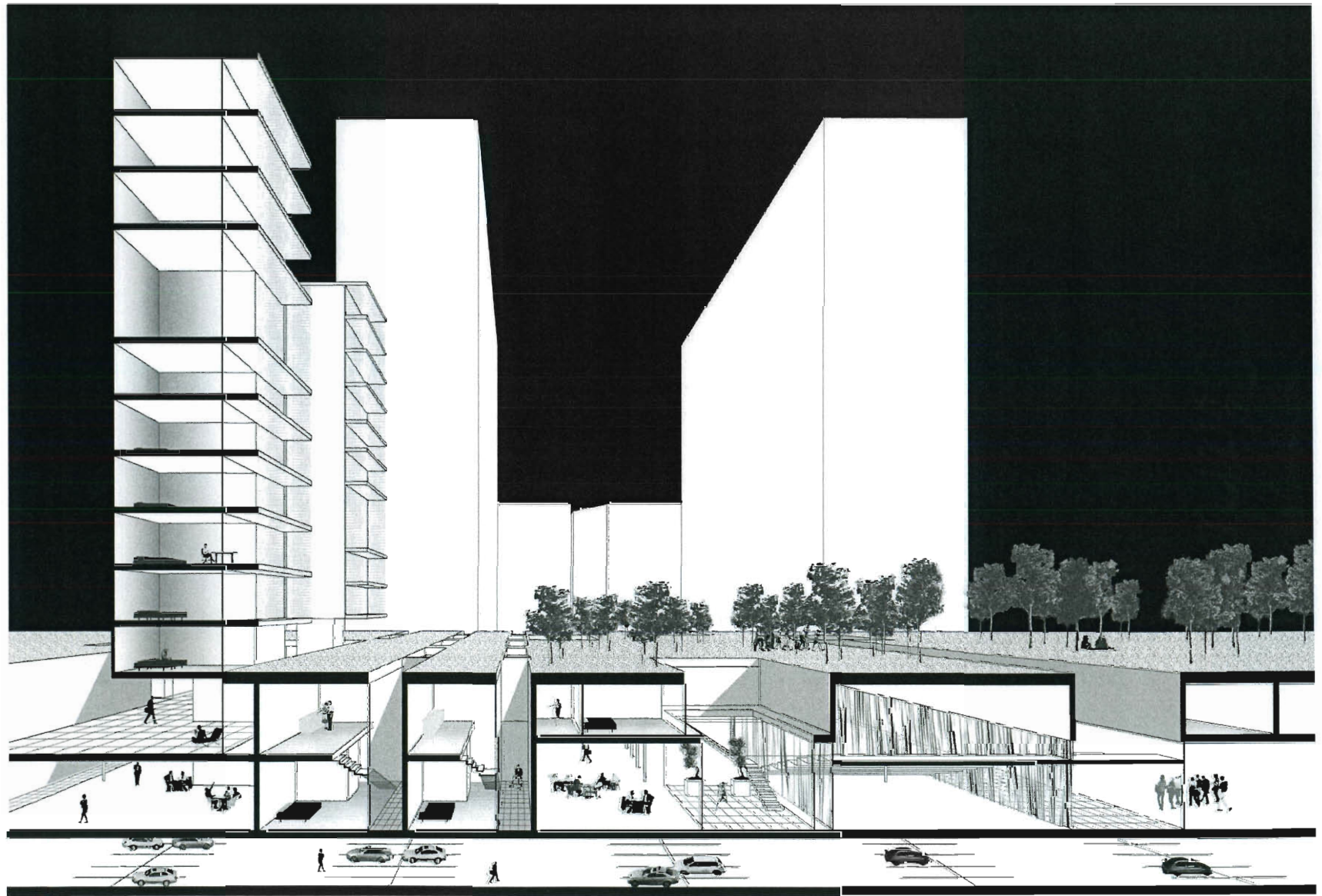


LOWER FLOOR PLAN
 1 BEDROOM
 2 BATHROOM
 3 STUDY
 4 PATIO

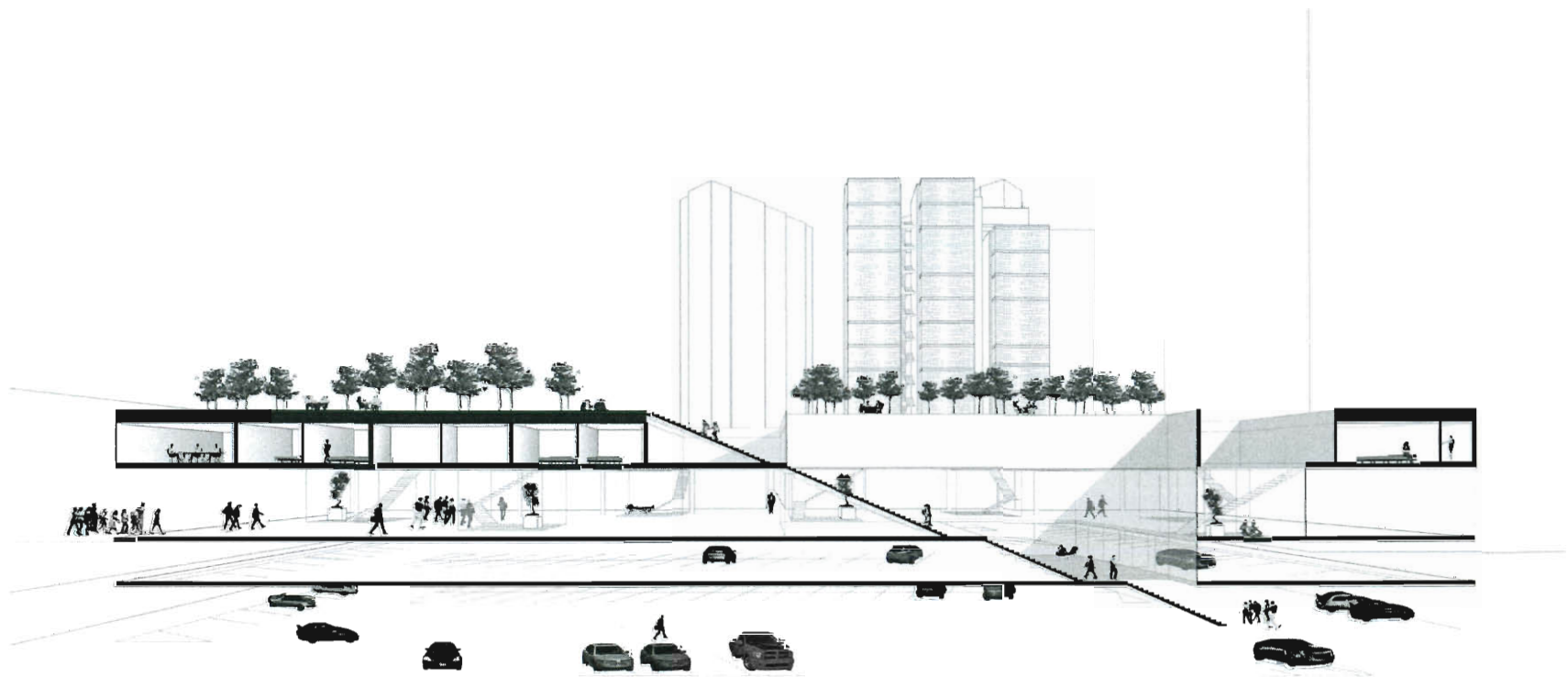


SECTION A-A
 1 LIVING AREA
 2 SLEEPING
 3 PATIO
 4 ADJACENT UNIT

Different Types of Apartments



North/South Partial Section



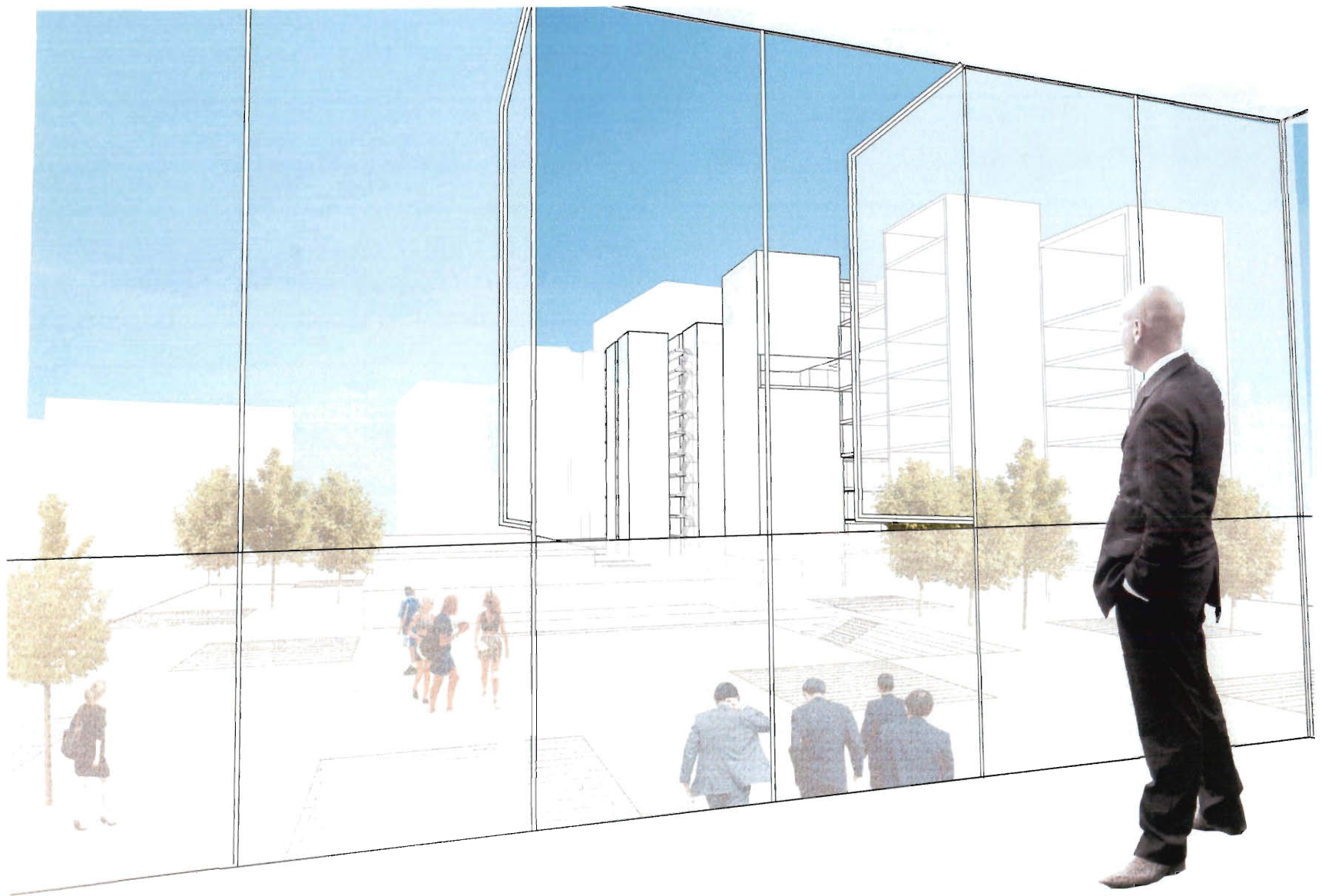
East/West Section



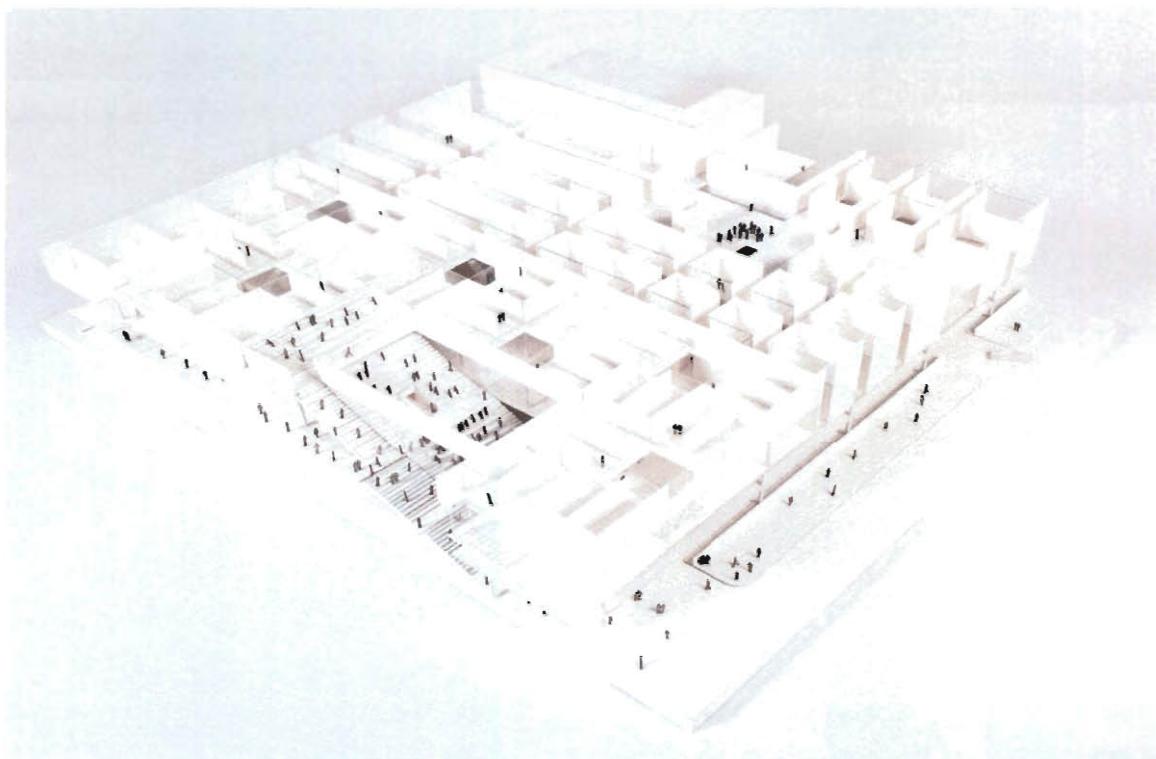
Northwest Corner Section Cut



View inside plaza level.

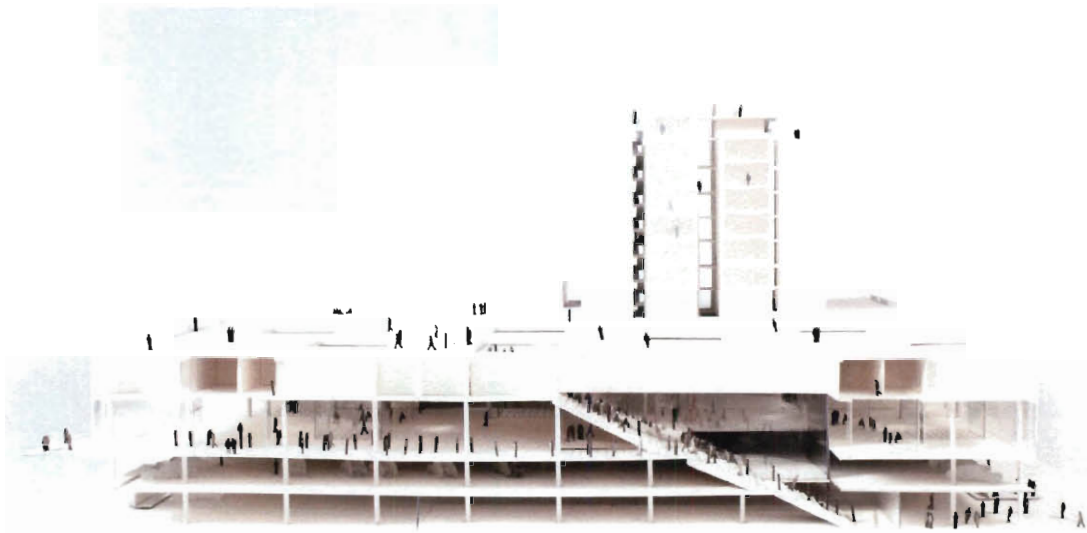


View of roof park from tower apartment

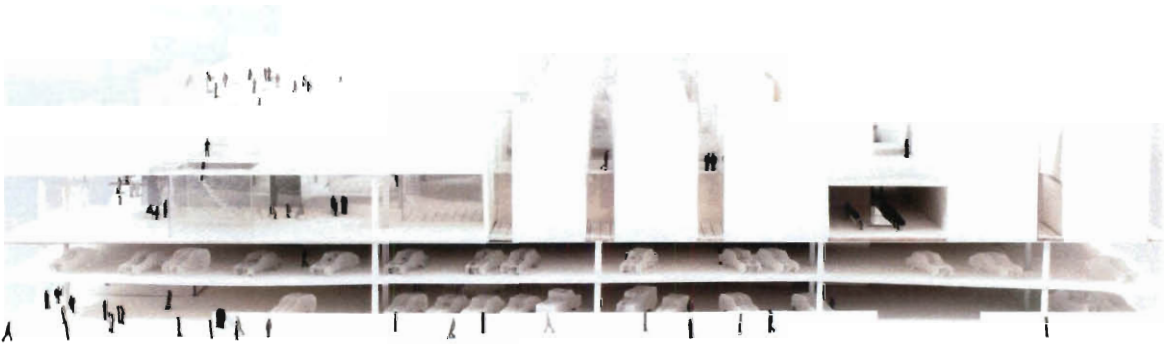


Sectional Model_scale: 3/16" = 1'-0"

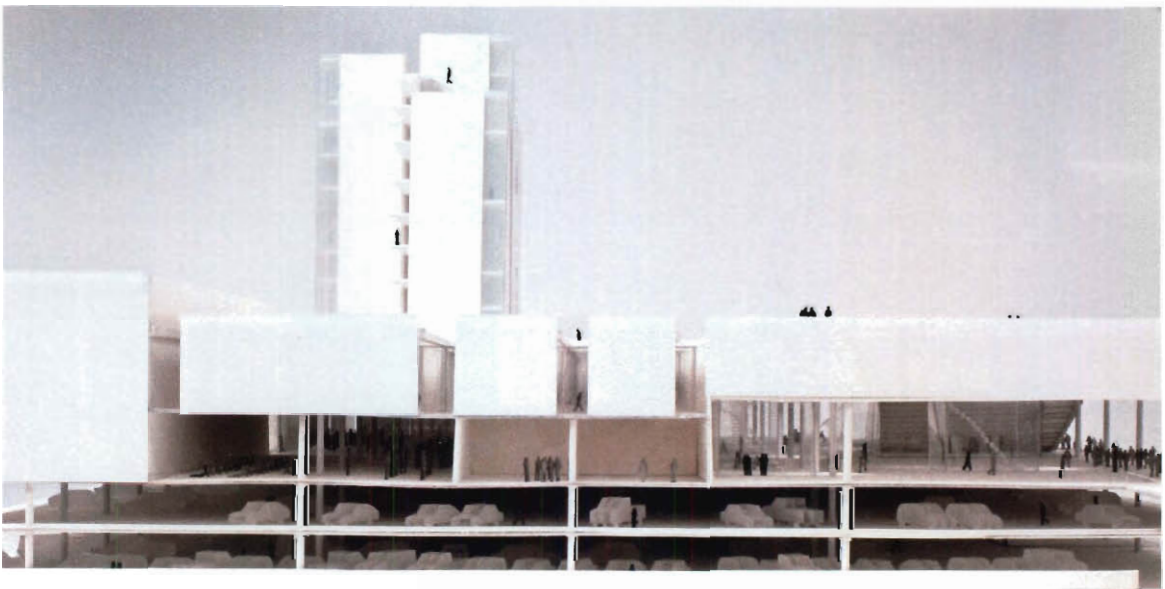
1



2



3



East/West Section (1) North Facade (2) South Facade (3)

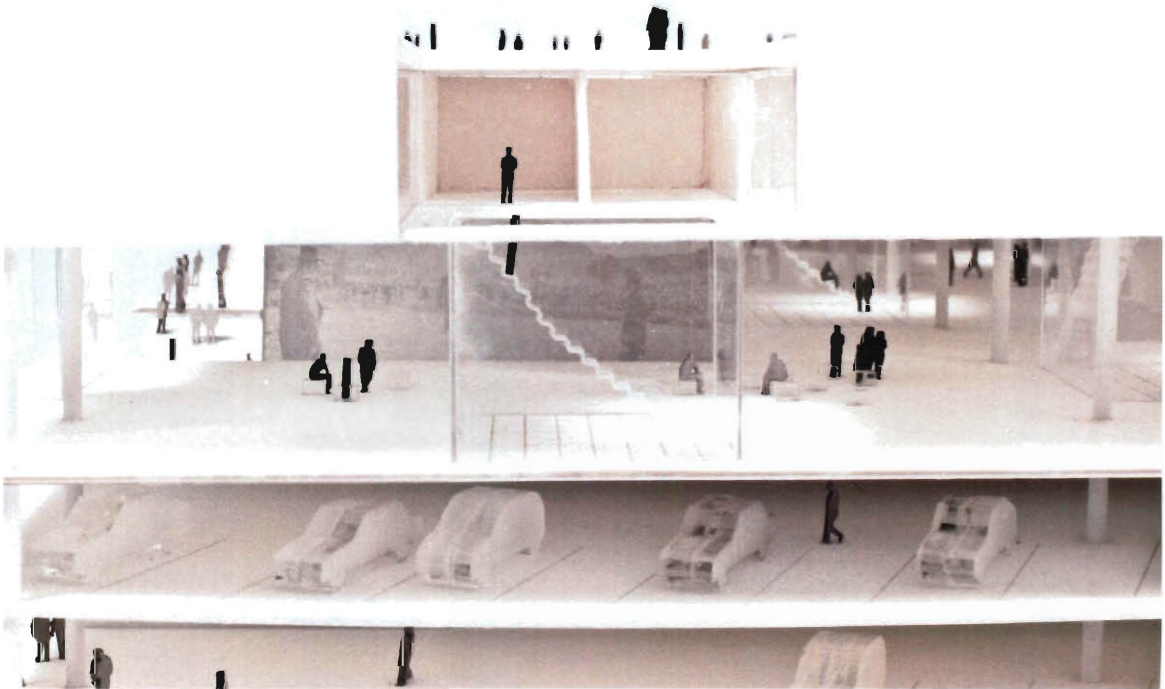


View at Main Entrance

1

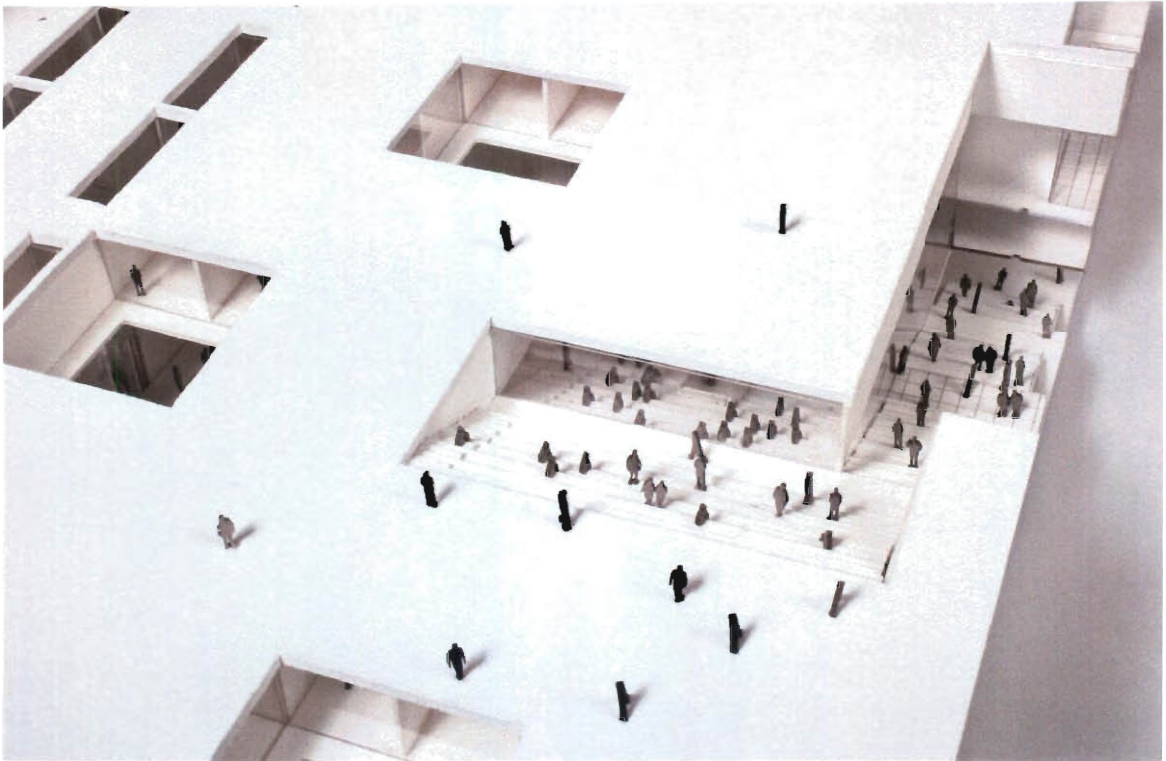


2

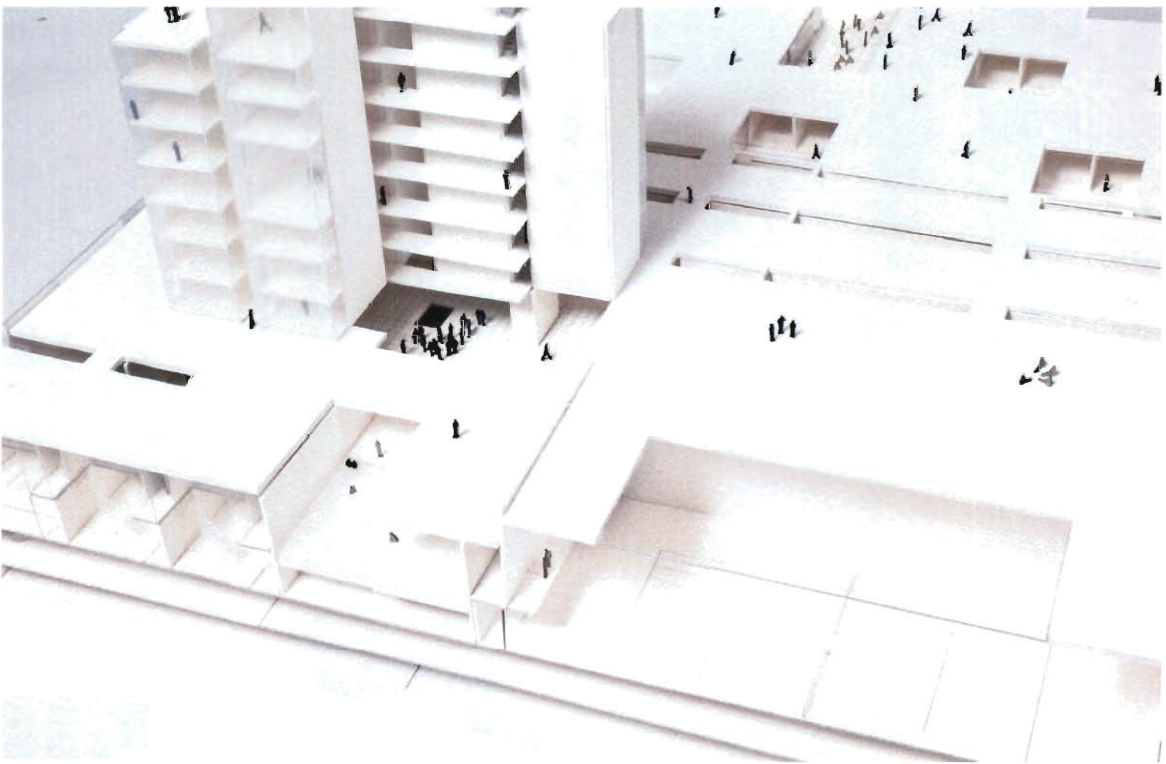


View at Plaza (1) North Facade: Ground, Parking Level, Plaza Level, Hotel Level, and Roof (2)

1



2



View at Roof: main stairs and cinema (1) sunken courtyard, baths, tennis court (2)



Aerial View of Greenway Plaza

interface | 'intər fās |

noun

1 a point where two systems, subjects, organizations, etc., meet and interact

• chiefly Physics a surface forming a common boundary between two portions of matter or space,

2 Computing a device or program for connecting two items of hardware or software so that they can be operated jointly or communicate with each other.

in-between informal

adjective

situated somewhere between two extremes or recognized categories; intermediate : *I am not unconscious, but in some in-between state.*

noun

an intermediate thing : *successes, failures and in-betweens.*

interstitial | 'intər sti sh əl |

adjective

of, forming, or occupying interstices : *the interstitial space.*

noun

"Space between territorial boundaries; one does not dictate the other but coexist; event space with dynamic indeterminate relationships." - Anthony Vidler

interstice | in 'tərstis |

noun (usu. **interstices**)

an intervening space, esp. a very small one : *sunshine filtered through the interstices of the arching trees.*

interval | 'intərvəl |

noun

1 an intervening time or space: *pure formation (potential) without form; both indeterminate and correlated; directed but not predetermined* - Sanford Kwinter

2 a pause; a break in activity

3 a space between two things; a gap.

ma ^[mā]

noun

1 interval, space

2 place, between

3 Spatial concept experienced in between what the viewer sees and how the view perceives it: *the space between, empty interval charged with energy* - Fumihiko Maki

margin

excess capacity that enables different and even opposite interpretations - Rem Koolhaas

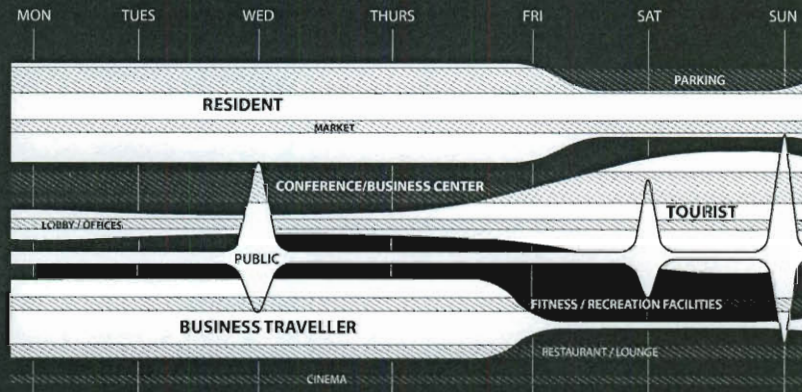


Temporary Populations:

An Architecture of the Interstitial

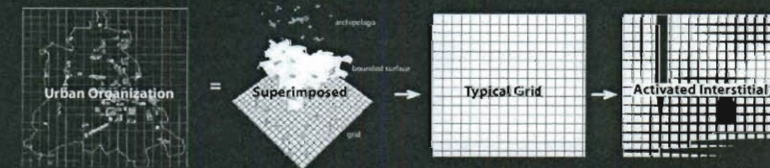
Author: [Name], Project: [Name], Location: [Location]

One of the most unique aspects of the extended stay hotel typology is that as demographics of temporary populations within this dwelling type shift, relationships must be renegotiated. In order to best respond to the demands of this spatial and temporal uncertainty, this project proposes how this new contingent population and its accompanying programmatic temporalities might cohabitate on same site. The focus of this research is to leverage the latent potentials of interstitial space bound in an architectural assemblage in order to activate relationships between publics within a collective program.

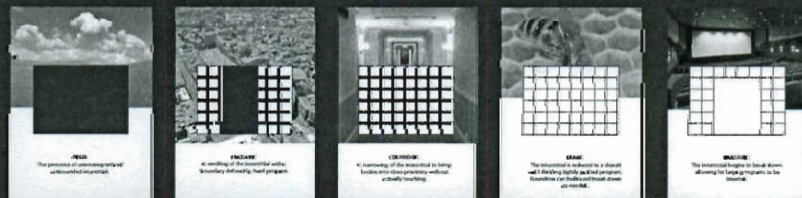


USER + PROGRAM / TIME

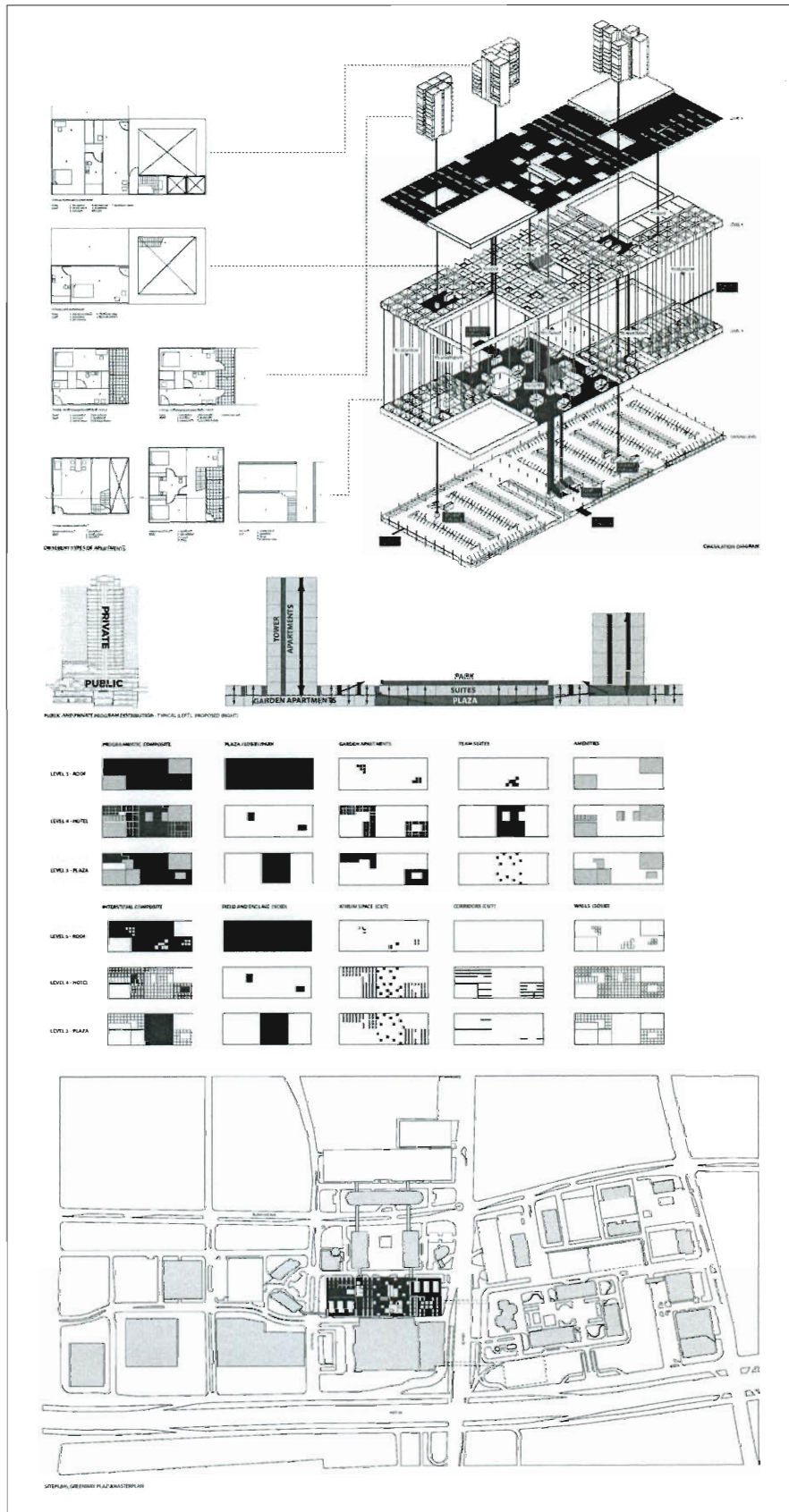
The program diagram above graphically represents how the program's temporalities and spatialities are organized. The diagram shows how the program's temporalities and spatialities are organized.

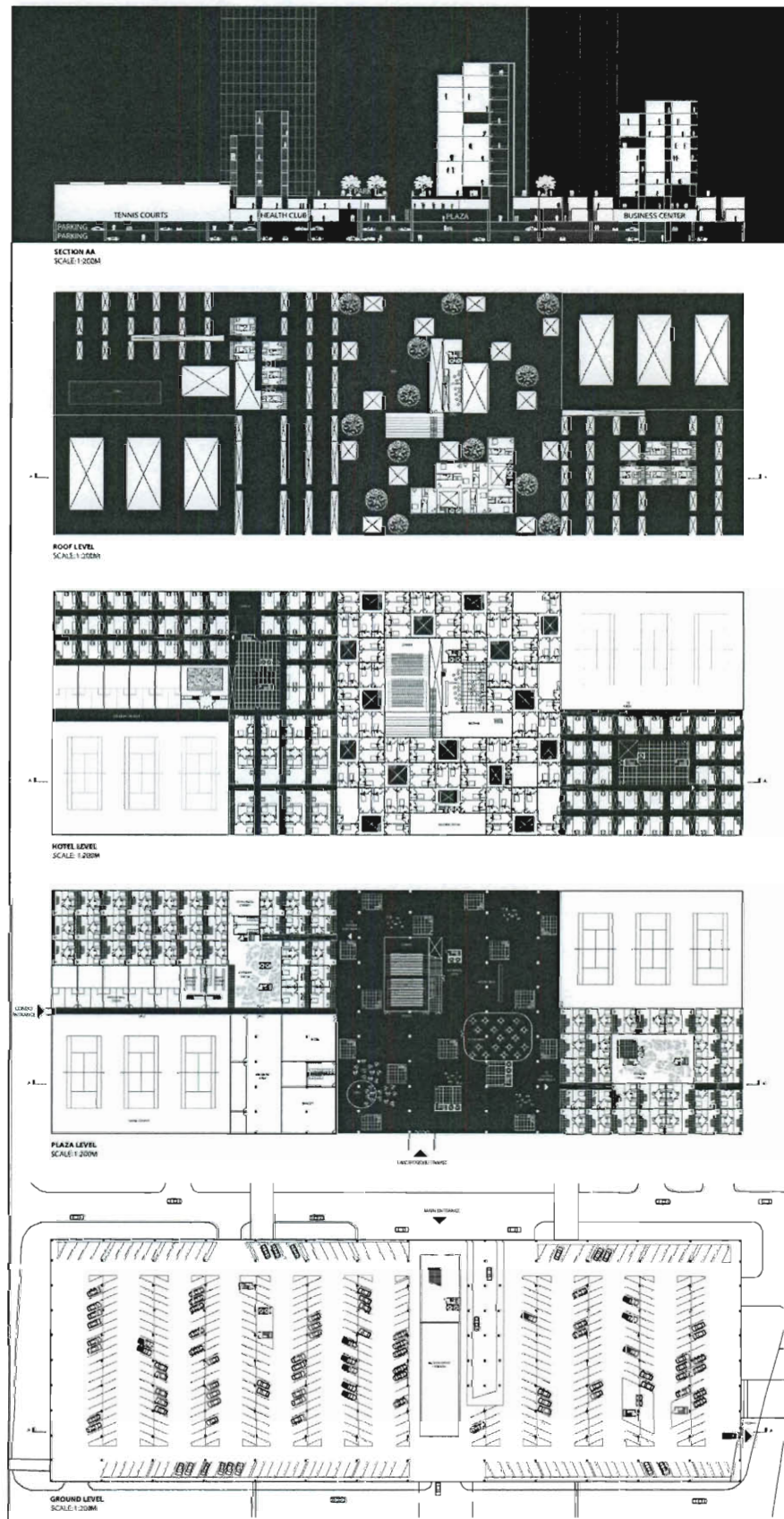


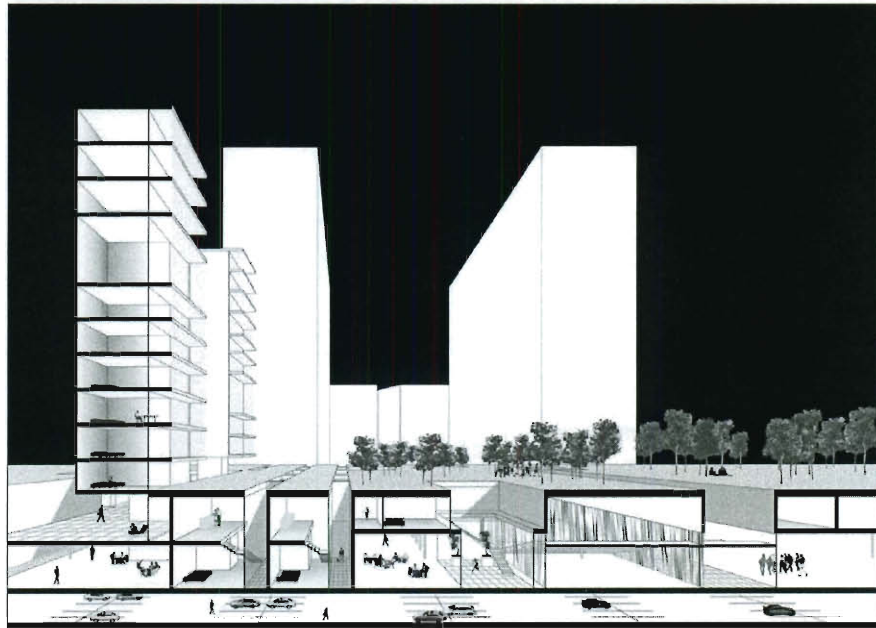
EXPERIMENTAL ORGANIZATIONAL LOGIC
A conceptual diagram illustrating the organization of an urban system. The diagram shows how the program's temporalities and spatialities are organized.



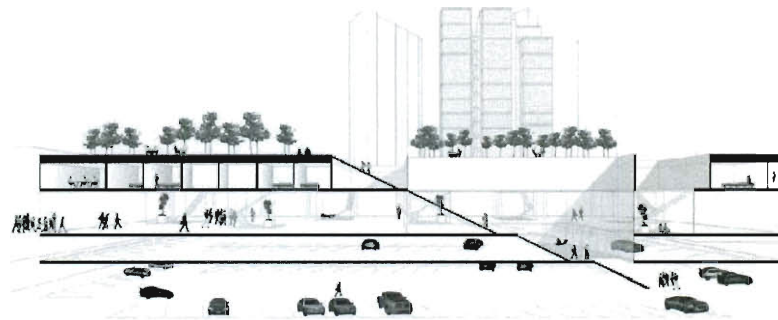
INTERIOR ORGANIZATION AND DETAIL
The diagram shows how the program's temporalities and spatialities are organized.







NORTHSOUTH MAIN SECTION



EAST WEST SECTION



NORTHWEST CORNER SECTION CUT

Final Jury:

Michael Bell, Columbia

Heather Roberge, UCLA

Sarah Deyong, A&M

Florian Idenburg, Solid Objectives, Idenburg/Liu

Jonathan Massey, Syracuse

Ron Witte, Rice

Sarah Whiting, Rice

Albert Pope, Rice

Scott Coleman, Rice

Troy Schaum, Rice

Heather Roberge (HR): I have two comments to start. First off the presentation both graphically and conceptually is very clear, which is incredibly helpful. We can then look at areas where the graphics could use attention materially and organizationally to make the things more convincing across scales.

So the first one will be more of a comment the second one a question. It seems like the enclave space and the corridor space are so distance from one another in terms of scale and kinds of populations they can accommodate. The limitation of the grid remains and the diagrams you show of the gradients and dilations, which make the black a figural graphic treatment, don't really work at the intermediate scale. Where I think you can move from being between objects - the thing between field and corridor - I really don't see happening in the plan to the degree the diagrams promise they might. So that is the first comment. I think for a number of reasons finding that intermediate scale where corridors stick to corridors and you begin to aggregate other scales of spaces by insisting on other economies, efficiencies or space making techniques that are possible there.

Then the other place where I have difficulty is in the inversion of using the black graphic representation in the plan to make a very thin wall and then to bifurcate that wall into space that is then coded in the same way in both concept and in your representation. So to me I think that everything sort of fails for me right at the intersection where the wall hits this space. There is no sort of scrutiny of exactly what that would mean as a material proposition and what that representation is. Maybe you can invert figure ground if you make more of the study of what happens right there. Because right now it becomes a real representational conceit when you don't solve that problem and if I were turn off all the poche I would loose your concept. So is there a way combing the material system through the section where you might imagine exactly what characterizes that kind of black space as an atmospheric and material proposition? So that is a lot to ask but I think that it is the natural kind of path of development to what you are speculating about.

Sarah Deyong (SD): One of the things that I liked in your presentation was the reference you made to O.M. Ungers, an architect that you referred to in speaking about his strategy of superimposed complexity and I think that is a really interesting precedent and case study. Ungers was part of Team 10 discussions back in the 1960's and 70s and so his idea comes out of a broader discourse basically about a matrix. And so I really like that you've come upon a very interesting strategy that then has continued to this day to an interesting urban typology or urban strategy that has been carried on to the mat building, Villa VPRO by MVRDV and so appreciated that those case studies have something to tell you about this strategy and how you formally work out this strategy.

One thing that you hit upon was superimposition. It is the superimposition of different layers and so the layering in the strategy of say your matrix is not for the layering to go up directly as extruded, but rather the layering is shifting and it shifts because these spatial opportunities happening vertically are really powerful. So that is one thing that would be really nice if maybe

the grid loosened up a little bit. When you start to look at the model you begin to see those opportunities. I think there was this one wall that had a graphic on it (here the theater). From this angle you see the graphic, but then the floor plate comes right up and touches the graphic rather than being that opportunity where the layer is not extruded straight up, but rather there is a shifting, it pulls back. It is sectional, which is what you are successfully conveying in these renderings.

There are a couple of things that comes out of our knowledge of this matrix that O.M. Ungers rightly pointed out. So one has to know how one begins to superimpose these layers like stratification. I mentioned the villa VPRO because there is curving there, which becomes another way in which one is creating continuity between levels.

The other point is circulation. Circulation is really quite important especially in respect to speaking of this new client; the transient dweller. So then what I would like to see is how have you really mapped out the circulation so that you create these opportunities for these kinds of events that you possibly want to stage or script. Not necessarily dictate, but perhaps allow for that event to happen. Also, going to the transient dweller, I would like to see more of how the dweller is informing the logic of this organization you set up.

Florian Idenburg (FI): I was speaking to a friend of mine the other day and he had to be in Hong Kong for 2 days and he flew from the airport JFK to Hong Kong. Then he went from the airport to the train, to hotel where he had his meeting, came back down to train and back to airport and JFK. He never exited the building. And that is indeed the condition of this new population you are describing. We had a discussion and he said that “I never felt like I was there.” Hong Kong had no influence on his entire experience, a continuous interior. Maybe this comes back to my earlier question of porosity and the size of this thing and I am wondering what are the elements that make this project site specific? What is the role of Houston and the particular site on the interior?

Rachel Dewane (RD): Exactly, I think that is what makes the site of Greenway so interesting. It is in a way a very generic urbanism. It has its own internal urbanism at the scale of twenty buildings. That is how I was the logic of this building; to create context within that internal urbanism.

That is also where Ungers entered – looking at complex urban organizational systems. When things become completely internalized it access is through tunnels and bridges and the “civic” amenities are absorbed.

FI: Why I would want to come back here? Is it a “home away from home?” What are the domestic qualities, the new domesticity you are offering?

RD: What is fascinating about the scheme is that it can accommodate many types of transient users at one. You can have the short term tourist staying in a tour and you have long term residents in a garden apartment. The building can accommodate people who are there for one day or people who are there for a year and cohabitating. You are not pigeonholed into staying at a place that is for business travelers. You are in a small city with a diverse population.

Troy Schaum (TS): Wouldn't you say one response to this question might be because it is so horizontal it doesn't really deal with porosity or the site on the edge, but rather as a sectional layer. One thing you do get from this project is this amazing roofscape, which becomes almost a kind of park above the city and there is one view in your slide that you get a view across to downtown and across the treescape canopy of the city. I think that is one thing embedded in this project from the parking level up it is a sectional response to the context more than in the perimeter.

RD: That's exactly right. When you look up here, you see the sky and it is open air. You feel the context of the surrounding buildings as well.

Ron Witte (RW): I agree with Heather that your presentation was very articulate and I think there is a lot of material here that is really interesting to think about and I think you are clearly quite smart. But I think there is a devil here and the devil is...

Sarah Whiting (SW): Joel Olstien?
(laughter)

RW: The devil is the interstitial. The discourse of the interstitial that was launched about 20 to 25 years ago and had to do with the fact that nobody either really could or wanted to lay claim to what that really was. They said that it was good so they could say we could design this and talk about the thing between the two and we never have to tell anybody (or ourselves) what that thing between the two is. Your response just now that anything can happen in the black I think is a signal of that is that's what is going on. I think that undermines your capacity as an intelligent designer. In other words the interstitial is the devil. You want to be able to lay claim to what that is opposed to what it isn't or the fact that it can do all things. I don't think it can actually hold 3 people and 3,000 people in the same way. It doesn't. I think that those are two very different spatial problems.

On the other hand to pick up on, I think Heather raised a very interesting representational problem, which actually is manifested spatially, and is a really good hint on where to go at exactly that. There are many places (points to the model) right here where this little piece of white sticks into this giant black that is interesting to me. Or you see this hole? Looks what happens here when this apartment. I don't think this is a really good planimetric X Y logic. I think you want to look at this in a diagonal sense. Look at what happens through here, in here, to here.

These are just corridors and you should call them what they are. When you connect this to this there is a funny kind of capillary thing that happens where this leaches out into this systems and this leaches out into here and these should be connected and create kind of pods of leaching and I think that is actually very interesting. It is more definitions of relationships that occur rather than the definition of subunits and leave there network of things among them unattended. I think that is what you are tending to do and that is a bad life raft as a designer.

SW: It is also interesting in light of what Troy was saying. If you are very specific about those two conditions than I think that is useful in terms of laying out, say, the corridors, which really aren't as interesting as other parts of the project. One ideally redefines issues of domesticity and (shared space in proximity to domesticity) and the other one redefines a relationship to the city. I think it suggested and we can intuit it. The idea that you are not really away from the car city and the relationship to downtown which often you don't get. So capitalizing on the relationships you set up in the plaza are suggested but not really exploited. Similarly the domestic situations are suggested in those views but you are not yet really taking advantage of that being the locus of the project.

RW: You don't want to pin this. All of us are loathed to say if I design like this these are the activities that will happen there. Things happen as a kind of flicker: there will be larger groups, smaller groups, daytime groups, nighttime groups. I would see this in that way. I could imagine a different presentation where on the screen you would have that plan and you go through 5 key scenarios – there aren't 100,000, there are 5 key ones - and those kind of flicker at different states, sometimes its group occupied, sometimes it is collective, sometimes a hallway between the two. And then I think you can see the figure of your new collective. I thought was really nicely put the way your were seeking that and I absolutely agree.

Maybe a new world. We invite you guys to come to Houston and the first thing you do is role your

eyes. Maybe this is a place where you come and nobody needs to role their eyes because they are not really coming to Houston. There are all kind of interesting scenarios that play out in this once you start to put this in motion, but I would start specific not with anything can happen. That is bullshit.

RD: I was not trying to say that. Actually, I was trying to be very specific. The word interstitial implies that it's a leftover space, where anything can happen, so I understand where it becomes a devil for you.

RW: I just hate the term.

RD: I was trying to reinvent it in a way. I tried to give it meaning and give program and give it space to be investigated, rather than be left over.

RW: That comes through, but right from the get go you need to take a term like that and make it accessible, definable, articulated. Interstitial intrinsically resists all that.

SW: I would like to be more convinced of the corridors. I don't know whether they need to be so exaggerated in order for those other spaces to work better...or in order for us to be convinced that there is something so different going on. These spaces right here I find really unpleasant or even terrifying in their dimension. I don't think they can ever really be productive in a way that is useful so why not make them bigger or a little more normal to help focus attention on the other spaces.

HW: Or to expand and contract again so that they are punctuated.

RW: Like that black mat on the slide

HR: There seems to be nothing worse than not being able to measure where you are in a hotel corridor. I was even looking at the tennis courts. They are sort of, I think in these diagrams, the amenities diagrams are really missed opportunities in understanding. You can saddle bag activities onto corridors so it gives you way to expand and punctuate the corridor and also to intersperse amenities in so you have to kind of discover where they are.

RD: That was the intention of these enclaves. They were the intersection of the corridors, which become open outdoor spaces.

Scott Coleman (SC): What I find fascinating about the project is something I think it is implicit in what you have done but you haven't expressed. You used Ungers and there are certain differentiated types of urbanism in the plan. I do have to agree with the comments about the diagrams and the plans: you've done diagrams opposed to a plan. It would have been fascinating to see, those are diagrams and to also see plans as architectural plans. What you have and discovered is this binary thing going between black and white that I think is fascinating because what it does is create all these different types of urbanism. You've only mentioned one that is the Ungers thing. So you have something like Archizoom in here, you City of the Captive Globe in here, and you have something like objects floating in soup like the Ungers thing here. So through this binary thing of black and white you have systems of public and private you've actually created at least three different types of urbanism. You even have central park right here (pointing to model) and that is what I find fascinating potential in the thesis of the project: you've managed to construct these very different types of urbanism through the of dialectic between public and private. Perhaps this is where the potential of the program would have come in. If you use the program (in a way I don't think the program really matters and it could go away) but the program could be

helpful to you in exploring what those formal things meant. This doesn't necessarily have to be work spaces or living spaces or whatever, it could be a super market or anything. But through those programmatic explorations, what Ron is talking about, that you could then explore this binary systems potential in these different types urbanism. I think that would have been the potential of the thesis.

Albert Pope: I think the urbanisms within this are interesting but they are all in someway shrink-wrapped. They're in the endless interior, which is not a criticism. I think the problem - I mean we all have the problem - of the love hate relationship with endless interior. Especially in the site it is unavoidable. I think it is clear (maybe a little unclear) if the endless interior is the subject. You could read that diagram as a taxonomy of the endless interior where the corridor goes away and it is completely hermetic. As the corridor begins to widen it begins to open up to other things and I think that is probably the overall strength of the project.

But we should go back to Florian's original question about 'are you there?' especially in an environment like this. I think oftentimes, most times in your section, you are orienting to the sky, which I think is probably an exclamation point on the endless interior opposed to something that brings us something that brings an alternative to it or grounds us in a place that is unique. To the extent that that was followed through is quite beautiful and successful.

TS: I think the project was continuously a struggle between developing these very discrete specific types of inventions in relation to the section. Questions early on about porosity. How you are organizing the plan in relation to the publics, actually went to your initial thesis about a kind of public collectivity versus a personal domesticity not so much as a gradation, but a kind of shift across the different types you developed.

One of the problems we are having in the end in discussing it is the accumulation and endless interior. There is a tension between the specific sectional unit type and then what we are reading now as the endless interior. What was always a struggle for you to develop the continuity across the project, which is why some of the questions about representation, representing the corridor and double height space is completely cut through as the same black starts to get confusing because it was really a reductive palette of types that was then going to accumulate to produce this endless interior. I think we see it up on those drawings in plan and section, but it doesn't really come through in the final presentation as strongly as it did in the logic of you generating some of these types.

